

**JADAVPUR
JOURNAL OF
COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE**

39

2001-2002

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

39

K G Subramanyan	Education in India as it could be made	7
Ramakanta Chakrabarty	<i>Lokāyata</i> in History	15
Abul Hasnat	Arab-English Poetry: Literary Contacts in the Middle Ages	29
Sisir Kumar Das	Bengal's Memories of Portugal	61
Samantak Das	"The Survival of the Least Fit": Darwin, Detective Fiction and the <i>Fin de Siecle</i>	79
E San Juan, Jr.	Comparative Postcolonialities and the Dialectics of Subaltern Discourse	93
Debali Mookerjea	The Nationalist Construction of Femininity: Saratchandra's <i>Srikanta</i>	131
K Satchidanandan	Historicizing Sarojini Naidu	155
Avadesh Kumar Singh	The Belly or the Womb: is that the question?	163

2001-2002

Editor

Swapan Majumdar

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
CALCUTTA

**Founded by
Buddhadeva Bose**

Editor
1961-63 : Buddhadeva Bose
1964-82 : Naresh Guha
1983-95 : Amiya Dev

Editorial Board
Manabendra Bandyopadhyaya Sibaji Bandyopadhyaya
Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta Swapan Majumdar

Price: Rs. 50.00/\$ 7.00

**Published by Rajat Bandyopadhyay, Registrar, Jadavpur University,
Calcutta 700 032 and printed by Technoprint,
7 Srishtidhar Dutta Lane, Calcutta 700 006.**

ISSN 0448-1143

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

39

Our Contributors

K G SUBRAMANYAN, the renowned artist and Emeritus Professor: Kala-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, delivered the Convocation Address at Rabindra-Bharati University, Calcutta on 07 May 2001. The basic text is reproduced here. Ramakanta Chakrabarty is a former Professor in History, Burdwan University. His researches on Vaishnavism and Popular Culture have won wide acclaim in the scholarly domain. Dr. Abul Hasnat, a Senior Lecturer in English, Berhampur College, Murshidabad, has worked in depth on the impact of the South and Central Asian culture on the European literary tradition. Sisir Kumar Das, an unfailing crusader for the discipline has just retired as the Tagore Professor in the Department of Modern Indian Languages, Delhi University. Samantak Das is a Reader in English, Visva-Bharati, and specializes in Victorian Literature. E San Juan, Jr. has already distinguished himself as a literary theorist of the postmodern/postcolonial literature. Debali Mookherjea, a former student of the Jadavpur Department is working for her Ph.D. degree at the Chicago University, USA. Dr. K Satchidanandan, the eminent Indian poet writing in English and Malayalam, is also the Secretary of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. Avadhesh Kumar Singh is a Professor in English & Comparative Literature, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, and edits *The Critical Practice*.

JJCL being an annual publication, contributors quite often have to wait more than a year to see their articles in print. We are extremely thankful to them for their patience and cooperation.

EDUCATION IN INDIA AS IT COULD BE MADE

In our present democratic society everyone has the right to education, not just a privileged few. Naturally the universities are no more exclusive *groves of academe*. They are open arcades where you can shop for various kinds of knowledge and skills, and various incentives for intellectual growth. Consequently they lay greater stress on the acquirement of knowledge and technologies and their gainful use and less on the transformation of the human being. When the frontiers of knowledge and technology are changing as quickly as they do, this emphasis on the needs of the here-and-now exceeds, understandably, the interest in timeless values. Though any well-conceived educational institution will, doubtless, try to balance one with the other and ensure that the well-trained professionals it turns out will also be thoughtful, sensitive and responsible human beings. Against this changed background how to our universities play their roles? When I pose the question, I have in mind the generality; not special institutions like universities that have distinguished track records.

What we know of these is, normally, from what is projected in the media. And when is projected in the media is not highly complimentary to them. What they hold up to view is, more often than not, violence on the campuses — the *gheraos* of Vice-Chancellors by students, scuffles between teachers and teachers, confrontations between the teachers and the administrative staff and group vandalism by many of them, going to the extent of ravaging their own premises, libraries and laboratories. They rarely mention their academic achievements or their contribution to the enlargement of knowledge, encouragement of creativity or enrichment of the living environment.

Is this because the media consider that real news is always bad news? Or because they have no obvious proof that the universities are serving their purposes they are supposed to serve? Even if we agree that today's media have a pronounced appetite for the gory and the

sensational, we cannot also deny that there is a marked increase in tensions on our academic campuses. Those who live close to one cannot fail to notice them and be upset by it. Such uncivilized behaviour in centres that are supposed to civilize society cannot but arouse public concern. Educational planners have to take serious notice of this and seek out the roots of these tensions and, to follow, make a concerted effort to remove them as early as they can. Merely tiding over each successive crisis through haphazard policing, or appeasement, does not address the question.

On the face of it, most of these tensions come out of a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction that pervades all sectors of the academic community, namely, students, teachers and administrative staff; and their alienation from each other. The unease among students comes out of various factors — a feeling that the educational programmes they undergo do not equip them properly for the careers they long for; their disappointment with the support facilities available — like libraries, reading rooms, laboratories, lecture rooms, studies and hostels — in many of the institutions; their distrust of the assessment procedures; and over, all these, their fear of the uncertainties that await them when they step out of the institution. The teachers on their side feel that they work under great pressure, have no proper avenues for academic advancement, and, in most of the institutions they serve, do not have the facilities with which they can bring liveliness to their educational function. So even the enthusiastic among them slowly regress into being mechanical vehicles of information; and the boredom that ensues digs a chasm between them and their students. The administrative staff, in most places, are generally a tribe apart. Barring the top echelons, like the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrars, they rarely keep themselves informed about the university's academic objective and functions; or show any enthusiasm for these. Nor are any special efforts made by those in charge to acquaint them with these. They are largely used to keep records in order, police the activities and enforce certain rules and regulations. And within all this there is an undercurrent of distrust for the rest of the community. The reasons for this are not far to seek. Our whole administrative system still runs on the models the Britishers used when they ruled this country; where, to contain the damage they would suffer from the 'perfidious' Benias they depended on, they devised a whole line

of checks and balances. The administrative staff of most universities, who have much to complain about their service conditions and prospects, enforce these with a kind of sadistic pleasure.

Should this state of affairs continue? Is it not possible for us to restructure these institutions and counteract this suicidal fragmentation? And convince these three sectors that they are essential participants in a great endeavour to ensure a glorious future for this nation? I am certain that if they all come together in a spirit of camaraderie and discuss their problems with the educational planners; and find solutions for these in the light of the central objective, there will be a sure way out of the present impasse.

But it may be useful here to recall how we have come to this pass. And if you bear with me, I want to repeat here few things you already know, for the sake of the argument. To begin at the beginning — what are the main purposes of education? To introduce the youth to the body of knowledge and skills that have banked up through the ages. And enable them, with this, to serve the society that is. Then give them the tools and incentives to hold these to scrutiny in the light to changing circumstances; *i.e.* reinterpret them, refine them, if needed, replace them with new device and formulations; and, through this, bring each individual as close as it can to what he or she is destined to be — a subversive part of nature, at the same time its questioner and custodian; or, to use an upanishadic image out of context, a bird on the tree that eats its fruits on one side and watches it with detachment on the other, which watching carries him or her from what is outside to what is inside, namely objective enquiry to introspection. And, finally, build with such individuals an enlightened society that safeguards the right of each person to grow up to his or her full potential.

True, all this does not come in one packet. It comes in stages and at various levels. Though at each stage the said two sides have to co-exist, namely learning and individual search. And, in an alert and dynamic society, they have to be *essential* parts of education at the higher levels.

We had started giving thought to this even before we had gained our independence. So, when we actually did, we had on our hands an ambitious agenda. We had till then charged our colonial rulers with complacency and said that they used the educational system to serve

their narrow ends and delay our progress. So we had a commitment to transform it when we assumed the reins of power ; and do this in the shortest possible time. To start with, we had to make all our men and women literate. Then provide all our children modern education at least up to the primary level in the next fifteen years. Then expand the coverage of high school education and diversify it. And, finally, see that all our institutions of higher learning went further than training informed and polished officials and administrators to produce scientists, technologists, entrepreneurs, thinkers, writers, artists and other creative men who would together, lead us to our rightful destiny.

Did we follow this agenda? Apparently not, if we go by what we see around us today. The targets we set ourselves have still to be met. We have not been able to remodel our educational system substantially ; or upgrade its standards. Worse still, we have not been able to fire our youth with a desire for knowledge and skills on the scale required. Large numbers of them are still passive and listless. And the few who strive for excellence do so under the pressure of gross self-interest, meaning attractive jobs and handsome salaries.

I may be told by experts that I am being unduly critical; that things are not that bad. They are sure to confront me with impressive statistics — the number of institutions that have come up, the amount of money spent, the number of young men and women who have come out of schools and colleges and pursue distinguished professional careers, run our governments, manage our industries, man our workshops and laboratories, even migrate and get gainfully employed in the most advanced countries and earn a good name. All this is incontestable. But, for this largest and most populous democracy in the world, whose cultural history extends back unbrokenly for more than three thousand years, this is a small achievement, in the span of half a century.

It may be useful for us, here, to look for the reasons why. I read them, in my inexpert way, as follows: when we became independent those who assumed power had a large country to administer, safeguard and lead towards economic progress. For this they needed a large body of technical personnel. And they were in a hurry. They did not have, therefore, the time to overhaul the existing educational infrastructure as

they had planned to. Instead, they decided to use it in the best way they could. And once they started doing so they were obliged to line up with these whatever new institutions they added later, for the sake of uniformity.

But this infrastructure did not have the kind of diversity and resilience that a vast sub-continent like ours, with a confounding variety of environments, culture groups, economic levels and patterns of life, needed in the new democratic context. Independent India wanted to bring education to all men and women and enlist their participation in nation building at its various levels. The objective of the colonial rulers was smaller. Their schools and colleges were designed to train the youth of the upper sections of society to man their administrative system and work under their supervision. For all its virtues its training was broad and unfocussed; and just enough to make them efficient and loyal workers under specialist supervisors. Those of them that rose to supervisory positions later did so after gaining specialised knowledge through years of experience. The certificates and degrees were, therefore, *entry permits* for such services and, consequently, streamlined and simple.

Our new administrators discovered this soon enough. So when they set up the University Grants Commission they made it send circulars to all universities asking them to offer courses that were *job oriented* (or, in other words, more focussed); and promised various kinds of incentives. But the prevailing infrastructure was too simple for this; and the offered incentives were too insufficient to effect any basic transformation. But no university wanted to forego the incentives however small; and accepted to do so with whatever they had; which meant, in effect, that they offered to do what they were not fully equipped to. So these new courses, too, were not focussed enough. And the new certificates and degrees still remained *entry permits* for employment, though in different colours and tints.

This had various deleterious side-effects. People started to conceive a *job* not as *something to be done* but as *something that promised a salary or sustenance*. The certificates and degrees provided them the *eligibility* for this. Naturally everyone scrambled for this eligibility and the ensuing *social accreditation*. In the meanwhile, the body of aspirants had grown and come to include young men and women from various

economic levels and cultural backgrounds. And a large number of them came from the disadvantaged groups. But no special effort was made to upgrade the suitability levels of the disadvantaged abreast with those of the advantaged. So the scramble led to unpleasant consequences. The centre of concern moved from the content of education to the *tags* it handed around. And under various pressures, both the aspirants and the administrators conspired to device easier ways of obtaining, or providing, these by lowering the achievement levels; and, in the process, eroded their credibility.

So many of the problem we are facing today on the educational and employment scene are the end results of our depending on an obsolete infrastructure. The old infrastructure was designed for a much simpler context and a fairly homogeneous urban middle class student body. We need now something that addressed the needs of a less homogeneous body, with various disparities coming from differences in the living environment and the economic circumstances and which, side by side, takes due note of the special talents, skills and susceptibilities of the diverse groups. But these questions rarely figure on the agenda of our academic bodies. Their discussions are mostly confined to administrative problems or modalities; or the medium of instruction and methods of assessment; they never give any attention to changes in objectives, strategies or orientations.

The effect of this has been devastating in the field of school education. After independence, each state centralised and streamlined school education, ostensibly to maintain uniform standards. This was an unwise thing to do as our school-going children come from various environments and family backgrounds and each group needs special handling for proper results. Our present school curricula and work calendars are designed to serve the needs of an urban careerist middle class. Imposing these on all the groups has been both unjust and counter-productive. It has led to high drop-out and failure rates and following this to a general sense of frustration and inter-group tensions and rivalries. Is this because the educational planners who come from the urban middle class could not look beyond their narrow interests? Or is it part of a larger strategy of those in power to alienate the youth from their native environments and steam-roll them into a common urban proletariat to serve the interests of the growing industrial world?

Whatever that may be, a sense of alienation is noticeable everywhere amongst our educated youth. The rural youth who go to schools become strangers to their native environments by the time they finish schooling and want to move to towns. The urban youth who complete their higher education, become part of a global white-collar proletariat, efficient perhaps, but rootless. Their interests are focussed on themselves and their careers. They are largely ignorant of, even callous to, their own environment and show no special interest in its amelioration. So while we boast of our spectacular achievements in nuclear technology and rocketry and of our youth who migrate to other countries to serve their high-tech defence and information industries, here at home, we do not have the needed expertise to recycle urban waste or provide pure drinking water to our villages and towns.

This lack of contact has adverse effects on both the individual and the environment. The environment suffers from neglect. And surrounded by its poverty the individual also stultifies. The horizons of an educated individual can only be as large as his response to what is around him is deep. Every peasant knows that, for the best results, he has to know his soil well and enrich it before he raises the crop. Similarly it is incumbent on the educated individual and the educational planner to ensure this inter-action to give the proffered learning a body and a context.

Our present system lays no emphasis on this. It is a matter of shame that even more than half a century after we have gained our independence, we have not made any effort to know our own physical and cultural environment on the required scale; whatever has been done is in bits and pieces. We have always left the larger effort to adventurous foreigners and have been content to rely on their readings instead of making our own. Even to solve our basic problems we depend on foreign advice and assistance instead of devising our own strategies. If certain foreign agencies are generous enough to provide these, they are, doubtless, laughing up their sleeves at our ineptitude. And not always is their involvement altruistic. We realise this only when they patent on the sly some of our traditional products or technologies as their own and pull the carpet from under our feet. I am sure that in the new competitive world we are heading towards, we shall realise this soon enough. And this will knock us out of our inertia and short-sightedness;

and force our universities to revise their strategies, change their infrastructure, augment their facilities, infuse in students and staff a spirit of cooperation, and given more attention to research and resource-building, in close contact with the country's environment and cultural heritage.

As things are, such a change is not still visible; particularly in the field of our cultural heritage. With its diverse language, religions, literatures, thought system, arts, patterns of life and more still, the living traditions, it is a stupendous panorama. Fresh studies and reappraisals of these can still offer us many new incentives for growth. But in the last fifty years much less attention has been paid to this field than in the previous hundred when so many research institutions, libraries and collections sprang up on private and public initiative. Even these are going to seed for lack of proper support. In the mad rush to multiply carrieriest courses (which I personally have no quarrel with), most of our universities under-fund such studies or discontinue them. If this neglect continues, many aspects of this panorama will be driven into extinction. And this will be no less an act of cultural vandalism than the blasting of the Bamiyan buddhas.

All this does not mean that I see a desolate future for our country. This country's genius has triumphed over worse circumstances. Even when it was a colony it brought forth a whole line a exceptional men whose importance the whole world has acknowledged — Rabindranath, Gandhi, Nehru, Raman, Ramanjuam to name a few. They are the names they know our country by. Probably there are some among youth out there, who will hopefully join the line. But artists like me cannot resist having dreams; one of which is waking up one morning to find this country completely purged of its petty conflicts, where all of us, young and old, will be working together to build an enlightened, compassionate and creative society that the world will marvel at. This may be a dream to me; but for others it is a challenge. For they are the ones that can make this real.

LOKĀYATA IN HISTORY

According to the *Vaṅgīya Śāradakoṣa* of Haricarana Bandyopadhyaya (vol. 2, p. 1976) 'Lokāyata' means 'Cārvākaśāstranuyāyī Nāstika' and 'Anāyasaśiddhihetu Loke Vistīrṇa'. The first meaning connotes an ancient school of materialism, which was said to have been founded by Cārvāka. The second means popular culture in a broad sense.

Let us first review the materialistic and atheistic implications of *Lokāyata*.

In India history began in Vedic poetry. Most of the Vedic poets and priests vigorously preached the view that the highest religion consisted in the performance of Yajna or sacrificial ceremony. At least one *Yajña*, which was called *Asvamedha Yajna* had an orgiastic character. The highly conservative culture of Harappa and Mohenjodaro was replaced by the essentially barbaric culture of the Aryans who imagined the existence of a disorderly pantheon or deities. One of them was Indra, whose brutality in battle was matched only by the savagery of the Assyrian kings, whose genocidal achievements were recorded in numerous ancient inscriptions. The Aryans gradually expanded southwards and eastwards from the Punjab. By the tenth century BC, when they had occupied Kurukshetra and the region of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, the first steps in philosophical speculations had been taken, and sceptics were already asking whether it was really possible to know the ultimate basis of the universe. In the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* of the *Rgveda* (X/129/7) it is stated: *Ko addhā veda ka iha pravocat kuta ajātā kuta iyam viṣṛṣṭih / arvāgdevā asya visarjane nāthā ko veda yata āvabhūva*. Who knows the *Upādānakāraṇa* (constituent elements of) and *Nimittakāraṇa* (reasons behind) created matter? The famous *Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta* (Rg. 10/121) asks the question: *Kasmai Devāya Haviṣā Vidhema?* Since the world was created before the gods, to which god should we consecrate *Havi* or *Ghi*?

It is reasonable to think that the Aryans imposed their culture on the people whom they had conquered. Later, in the seventh and sixth centuries BC the whole development of philosophy, from Upanisadic gnosis to complete materialism reflected the non-Aryan reaction to the Vedic Yajna and the rigid social order of four *Varṇas*. The very foundations of Vedic-Brahmanical orthodoxy were uncompromisingly denied by many preachers who disseminated new ideals. As DD Kosambi remarks, '...the new beliefs were the expression of some urgent need, some changes in the productive basis.' (Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 2nd. ed. 1975, p. 164.) The intricacies of the Vedic ritual hindered the development of a productive organisation, in which the *Śreṣṭhī* merchants played a leading part. What was necessary was the accumulation of capital which was squandered away in the performance of costly Vedic *Yajnas*. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Āruṇi, father of Śvetaketu, told his son that mind is created by a part of *Anna*, consumed by a man. (CU 6.5.1.) This is a distinctly materialist position. The message of Uddālaka Āruṇi, who must have been a most wonderful man, was that *Prāṇa* or the vital principle of life is inconceivable without the body, and the so-called *Brahmavidyā* can neither be taught, nor learnt when the stomach is empty. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, the following statement occur :

Plavā hyete adṛḍā yajnarūpā
aṣṭādaśoktamavaram yeṣu karma
etaccreyo ye'bhinandanti mūḍhā
jarāmrityum te purnaevāpi yanti

প্রবা হেতে অদৃঢ়া যজ্ঞরূপা
অষ্টাদশোক্তমবরং যেষু কর্ম।
এতচ্ছুরো যেহভিনন্দন্তি মূঢ়া
জরামৃত্যু তে পূনরেবাপি যন্তি॥

Avidyāyām vāhudhā vartamānā
vayam kṛtārthā ityabhimanyanti vālāḥ.
Yat karmino na pravedayanti rāgāt
tenāturāḥ kṣīṇalokāścyavante

অবিদ্যায়াং বহুধা বর্তমানা
বয়ং কৃতার্থা ইত্যভিমন্যন্তি বালাঃ
যৎ কর্মিণো ন প্রবেদয়ন্তি রাগাৎ
তেনাতুরাঃ ক্ষীণলোকাশ্চ্যবন্তে॥

The eighteen people who perform the *Yajña* are mortal. They unitedly perform a work which is bad. The fools who consider this work as a means of achieving something good and think of going to heaven, may get heavenly bliss for a short period of time. They are again born, and thrown into the cycle of birth and death.

Adhering to mere follies, some foolish people may think that they have gained wisdom. But they do not know the path of *Jñāna* or knowledge, and remained confined to the performance of *Yajña*. Ultimately they fall from heaven to the lowest depth.

The critique of Vedic religion grew very sharp in what is commonly called 'śramanic religion' which were preached by the Buddha, the Jaina Tirthankaras, and the Ājīvikas.

The Ājīvikas, in particular, lent immeasurable strength to what is called 'proto-materialism'. It is reasonable to think that the Cārvāka system of *Lokāyata* materialist philosophy, which was known as *Vitaṇḍāvāda* because of its brilliant sophistry, developed as an elaboration of the Ājīvika system of radical thought. According to the Pali canonical literature the six great Ājīvika thinkers, who were also known as six great heretics, were Makkhali Gosāla, Pūraṇa Kassapa, Ajita Keśakamvalī, Sanjaya Belatthaputta, Pakkuḍa Kaccāyana, and Niggantha Nataputta. Though they were radical thinkers, and notorious for their violation of Brahmanical norms, they were patronised by king Ajātaśatru and emperor Aśoka.

Makkhali Gosala was for some time a companion of Mahāvīra, the Jaina Tirthankara. He was known as the founder of the Ājīvika sect. The cardinal point of his thought was a belief in the all embracing role of *Niyati* or fate, which ultimately control every action, every development, and all phenomena, and left no room for human volition. Ājīvikism was thus founded on unalterable determinism, above which developed a superstructure of complicated and fanciful cosmology, incorporating an atomic theory, which was perhaps the earliest in India. The critics of the sect said that Makkhali Gosāla and his disciples were pursuing an antinomian system, some aspects of which were very obviously barbarous. But it is certain that, whatever their ethics, the Ājīvikas practised severe asceticism which often terminated, like that of the Jainas, in death by starvation. That severe asceticism and highly sexual contemplation were quite compatible is explicit in the life-style and concepts of such great Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saints as Sanātana Gosvāmin and Rūpa Gosvāmin, who practised severe asceticism in Vṛndāvana and formulated highly erotic versions of the career of Kṛṣṇa, the paramour of the milk-maids.

Pūraṇa Kassapa preached that neither sin, nor merit accrues from any action or activity. Sanjaya Belatthaputta, who was a Brāhmaṇa,

propagated agnosticism, and neither affirmed nor denied that good and evil deeds had good and evil fruit, of that there was, or was not, a world beyond. The proto-materialist Ajita Keśakambhāṇi believed that there was nothing in charity, *Yajna*, ritual, gods, good or evil deeds; the elements of which the human body is made dissolve into the original components earth, water, radiance (of fire), and air, when a man dies. Nothing is left of his virtues, soul, or personality. Pakuda Kaccāyana's doctrine, which resemble that of the later Vaiśeṣikas, maintained the permanence of earth, water, fire and air plus three more: happiness, sorrow and life. None could destroy, know, describe or influence these fundamentals in any way whatsoever. The sharp weapon which cut off a head merely passed through the interstices between the components. A criminal is put inside a big earthen pot and roasted over a great fire. The mouth of the pot is sealed. When afterwards the pot is removed from the fire and its seal is removed, only a charred skeleton is found. Does anybody see his soul rise upward from the pot towards heaven? This was a basic Ājīvika argument to which there could be only a negative answer.

Another Ājīvika named Pāyāsi, who was a prince, believed that the soul cannot be independent of the body. He argued that, as the Brahmanas believed that a virtuous man attained salvation after death, they, being virtuous, should commit suicide as soon as possible. But experience shows that they are quite fond of life and happiness. Kaccāyana preached that out of nothing, nothing comes, and what is, cannot be destroyed. If God has a form, argues a Deccanese Ājīvika, He cannot be better than man who, too, has a form. If God is formless, His inactivity must be greater than that of empty space, which is also formless. Being subject to passion and emotion, God must be incapable of creating the universe. And if God is devoid of passion and emotion, how can he generate passion and emotion in man? Therefore, God is not the supreme creator. The theory of *Aniścitavāda*, or Uncertainty, which Sanjaya Belatthaputta propagated, was a type of indeterminism or scepticism which paved the way for the critical method of investigation, and the Buddha's analytic method of enquiry.

Aruni Uddalaka of *Chândogya Upaniṣad* and sage Javali of the Ramayana took a dim view of the priestly rituals and mysticism. But we do not know whether they represented any particular school of

thought. Bṛhaspati, who, according to mythological accounts, was the *Guru* of the Asuras, was said to have written the *Lokāyata* concepts in the form of *Sūtras* or aphorism. Cārvāka was said to have been a leading propagator of the ideas of Bṛhaspati. The orthodox philosophers regarded Carvaka as a *Dhūṛta* or a mischievous man. Beginning from the Gupta age in the fourth century AD, the Brāhmaṇa revivalists waged an interminable and bitter struggle against the so-called heretical philosophers and sects. The fact that the Ājīvikas were supported by large sections of the common people was well known. During the quasi-feudal age stretching from AD 300 to AD 1200, the ruling class, led by the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas, for many reasons found it expedient to patronize the Purāṇic-Brāhmaṇic system of polytheistic Hinduism and the Vedic ceremonies. In some areas such as Bengal, the Brahmanas were substantially helped by the state to form and develop their settlements. The Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika systems of philosophy, which were basically atheistic, gradually yielded place to Vedantic monism.

Only two of the Cārvākas achieved some distinction in the seventh and the eighth centuries. They were Purandara (Seventh Century AD) some of whose formulations were mentioned in Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasamgraha pañjika* and Jayarāśi Bhatta (Eighth Century AD) whose curious work, titled *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* (*Lion of Dangerous Concepts*) was published in Baroda in the Gaekwad Oriental Series. In the fourteenth century, Madhavacarya, the celebrated scholar of the kingdom of Vijayanagara, collected in his *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* the fundamental ideas of the Carvakas in the first chapter. Even before him the Cārvaka philosopher was depicted as a preacher of heretical and immoral theories by Kṛṣṇa Miśra in his allegorical play titled *Pravodhacandrodaya*.

It is possible for us to determine the *Lokāyata* theories by using all such scattered fragments. The literature of the *Lokāyatas* is lost to us. We know only a few of them from the critical notices or *Pūrvapakṣas* of their opponents and detractors. There must be considerable distortion in such presentations. But the basic ideas are clearly identifiable.

The Cārvāka philosopher considers perception or direct evidence (*Pratyakṣa*), (*Dṛṣṭa*) as the only source of knowledge. According to Jayarāśi, who has been mentioned above, even *Pratyakṣa* may not be

always reliable as a source of knowledge. He views each and every evidence in a highly critical manner, which was known as *Vitaṇḍāvada*. This means that *Lokāyatas* like Jayarāṣi ultimately tilted towards idealism.

The Cārvāka philosopher totally ignored the evidence of *Śavda* or the verbal authority enshrined in the Vedic-Upaniṣadic literature. They heaped ridicule on the authors of the Vedic literature whom they described as hypocrites, fools, knaves, and demons. They considered Vedic testimony illogical, misleading, and absolutely contrary to real experience. They believed that there must not be any differentiation between the living body and the soul. The soul without a body, floating endlessly in the cosmos, was to them a will-o'-the-wisp. They thought that there was no special spiritual category because the existence of such an entity could not be logically proved.

It was, therefore, easy for them to argue that consciousness arose out of matter, or different combinations of matter. They argued that there was no permanent soul or deathless soul transmigrating from one body to another. We now see why this *Lokāyata* view of the soul or *Ātman* was so forcefully challenged in the second chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* where the permanence and universal pervasiveness of the soul was described in the highly attractive and impressive language.

Like the Ājīvikas, the *Lokayata* thinkers totally rejected the Brahmanical theory of *Karma* as the prime determinant factor in human life. They proposed *Yaddṛechāvēda* or accidentalism which, according to them, upheld the materiality of the world. The *Lokayata* view of the universe was that it sprang from a spontaneous combination of elementary matter. Their theory of *Svabhāvaēvāda* or naturalism admitted the operation of a law in nature, or a cause, which was not divine or supernatural. According to this theory nature was explicable only in terms of natural agencies.

The *Lokāyata*-Cārvāka considered spiritual concepts absolutely useless. According to him a person was happy or miserable because of natural reasons. He did not think that *Mokṣa* or Final Liberation was the ideal of life because it was vague. He suggested that we should eat, drink, and make merry.

Four Cārvāka verses are quoted below from Madhavacarya's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*:

1. *Agnihotraṃ Trayavedastridaṇḍaṃ Bhaṣmagunthanaṃ.
Buddhipauruṣahīnānāṃ, Jiviketi Brhaspati.*

Those who are bereft of intelligence and manliness have adopted as their profession Agnihotra ceremony, the reading of the three Vedas, and use of ashes as a veil over their bodies.

2. *Paśuscennihataḥ Svarge Jyotistome Gamisyati.
Svapitā Yajamānena Tatra Kasmānna Himsyate.*

If a beast is supposed to go to heaven after it dies, why does not the Yajamāna kill his own father?

3. *Yavajjivet Sukham Jivedeṇṇaṃ Kṛtvā Ghṛtaṃ Pivet
Bhaṣmībhūtasya Dehasya Punarāgamaṇaṃ Kutah.*

As long as you live you should live in happiness, and drink *ghi* by borrowing money. Where is the possibility of the reappearance of the body after it is burnt to ashes?

4. *Trayo Vedasya Kartāro Bhaṇḍa Dhūrta Nisācarāḥ.
Jarfari Turfarityādi Paṇḍitānaṃ Vacah Smṛtaṃ.*

The authors of the three Vedas Ṛk, Sāma and Yajur were a buffoon, a cheat, and a Raksasa. We remember such meaningless words as 'Jarfari' and Turphari' which were uttered by the so-called scholars.

The attack mounted by the Cārvākas on the traditional scriptural lore was very severe. They believed that life was a mixture of pain and pleasure, and that real wisdom consisted in lessening the burden of sorrows and securing as much pleasure as possible. *Lokāyata* philosophy emphasized the value of agriculture, trade and good administration, by which man could obtain all forms of physical enjoyment, prosperity, and welfare.

The absence of data makes it impossible for us to arrive at any definite conclusion regarding the impact of Cārvāka materialism upon the perceptions of the common people. For one thing materialism was proposed by the *Lokāyata* philosophers in the form of highly scholastic arguments which were not supposed to be comprehensible to the unlettered masses. For another, the *Lokāyata* philosopher preached hedonism, which was not acceptable to the orthodox Brāhmaṇas and the Śramanic sects. They also rejected the theory of the caste system. Louis Dumont observes that 'a sect cannot survive on Indian soil if it denies caste.' (Louis Dumont, *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Mouton, 1970, p. 36.) The Vīraśaivas or Lingayat sect wished to abolish caste.

But the history of the sect shows that it could not repudiate the caste system. (Farquhar, *Outline*, pp. 262-63.) In a society dominated by the concepts of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa* — The *Caturvarga* of classical Hinduism — it was very difficult for an ordinary man to pursue only *Artha* and *Kāma* and follow the materialist ideal. The community was very likely to ostracize a materialist.

We should, however, note that perhaps owing mainly to the influence of materialism, Indian philosophy was not purely spiritual in character. The various schools of Indian Philosophy recognize the ultimate reality of spirit in some *form* or other. The ultimate reality of matter in some form or other is also recognized. The Naiyāyikas, according to Dr. Daya Krishna, 'certainly believe in the ontological reality of the soul but they then deny to it the essential characteristic of consciousness which alone, according to everybody else, differentiates it from matter.' (Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy, A Counter Perspective*, Delhi 1991, p. 4.)

It is extremely difficult for us to say whether the science of politics, *Kāmasāstra*, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics were influenced by *Lokāyata* philosophy. We have already noted that there is an extreme paucity of *Lokāyata* works. It is, therefore, impossible for us to establish an integral relation between *Lokāyata* philosophy and science in ancient India.

What is, however, really striking is that, though there was a general belief in the attainment of *Mokṣa* through the continuous performance of religious rituals, the Indians cultivated *Artha* and *Kāma* to a considerable extent. It is undeniable that 'the Indian mental outlook has always been strongly affected by the spirit of conformism; especially, the Indians possessed an irresistible predilection for codification, classification, and patternization in every field, and a positive incapacity to deviate from the norm defined by tradition. But the characterization of Indian philosophy as 'spiritual' is, according to Daya Krishna, 'completely erroneous'. He thinks that 'Mokṣa' was a non-Aryan ideal, which was gradually incorporated in India philosophy. India presents a baffling paradox of extreme forms of renunciation and *bhoga* or enjoyment.

The life depicted in Sanskrit and Prakrit literature seems to be dominated by the principle of pleasure. For example, even in the gnostic

verses of Bhartṛhari, there is a remarkable combination of spiritualism and frank eroticism. It was customary for the Sanskrit poet to depict the night life of gods and men. In such frank erotic delineations, the spiritual meaning of *Dharma* and *Mokṣa* is conspicuously relegated to the limbo. Even such mythological works as the *Brahmavaivartapurana* and the *Bhāgavatapurana* contain long accounts of the sexual experiences of the gods and goddesses. We do not know whether the preponderance of *Kāma* in Sanskrit and certain types of Prakṛita literature is attributable to the influence of the *Lokāyata*. But we must aver that it contradicts the sociological concept of an interrelated *Caturvarga* which was offered by Max Weber and supported by Louis Dumont. We may even argue that Vātasāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, the uniqueness of which is unquestionable, was composed with a view to exemplifying the practice of perceiving the worldly pleasures to which the Cārvākas attached the greatest significance.

On the other hand, as Jeannine Auboyer observes, from ancient times, the importance of economics in Indian daily life was been emphasized in contemporary records, together with the question of how to maintain or raise the economic level. It was both an individual and a collective matter, and political control was applied as firmly in this field as it was in the realm of administrative practice. (Auboyer, *Daily Life in Ancient India*, p. 62.) Kautilya presents a detailed study of a highly despotic system, in which the state itself was the greatest merchant and trader, and in which morality, ethics, and religious considerations had hardly any place. An extreme form of worldliness, which was so intensely and passionately propagated by the *Lokayata* thinkers, is the key-note of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*. The epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata revolve around an unresolved conflict between the spirit and flesh. However, as D D Kosambi and Romila Thapar suggest, dynastic ups and downs and the consolidation of feudalism later lent immeasurable strength to spiritualism and Brahmanical orthodoxy. Yet, even at this stage, prostitution was a flourishing business especially in the large towns and capital cities. This is most brilliantly revealed in *Caturbhāṇī*, which is a collection of four *Bhāṇa* plays composed during the Gupta age.

That *Kāma* and *Mokṣa* or *Dharma* and *Kāma* could be easily combined is seen in certain passages of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and *Vṛhadāranyakopaniṣad* in which the sacrificial ceremony is described in

terms of the sexual act. Later, in the sixth century AD, *Lokāyata Dehavāda*, the philosophy of the human body, was first given a religious garb by the Sahajiya Buddhists in such works as the *Guliyasamājatantra* and *Prajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi*. The esoteric Buddhists not only hybridized the Sanskrit language, but also totally rejected the inscriptional ideals of the Great Tradition of Hinduism. The advice to follow reality, and to be practical in the affairs of life, which is so lucidly given in the marvellous stories of the *Pancatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa*, was carried over the extreme limits in the texts of Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism. The *Hebajra Tantra* (D L Snellgrove, *The Hebajra Tantra: A Critical Study*, in two parts, London 1959) for instance, gives the Tāntrika neophyte the following advice:

Bhagavan Aha :

Prāṇinasca Tvayā Ghātayā Vaktavyaṃ Ca Mrṣāvacah

Adattān Ca Tvayā Grāhyam Sevanam Parayōṣitaḥ.

Khānam Pānam Yathāprāptam Gamyāgamyam Na Varjayet

Snānam Śaucam Na Kurvīta Gramyadharmam Na Varjayet.

Nidrātyagam Na Kurvīta Nedriyānām Nivāraṇam.

You should slay living beings. You should speak lying words. You should take what is not given. You should frequent other's wives. Food and drink must be just as it comes. What is suitable and what is not should not be considered. One should not perform special ablutions. Do not abandon sleep, nor restrain your senses.

The Cārvākas, too, were depicted as immoral persons, addicted to the pleasures of flesh and engaged in anti-social activities. The critics saw no difference between a Cārvāka materialist and a Buddhist. This is stated in the following verse:

Pānam Surāsavaprāyaṃ Māṇsa Prāyaṃ Ca Bhojanam.

Dharmo Nidhuvana Prāyo Bauddha Prāyam Mahītaḥ.

(*Rasakalpadruma*, p. 507)

Whatever the materialist drinks is spirituous liqueur.

Whatever the materialist eats is meat. Whatever religion is supposed to be practised by him is but sex. In this world, the materialist is a Buddhist.

The 'left' Tantrikas postulated a theory of the combination of *Yoga* and *Bhoga*. They believed that *Mokṣa* comes out of enjoyment. The Śākta-Tāntrika argued in the following manner:

Yogī Cennaive Bhogī Syādbhogī Cennaive Yogavit.

Bhogaṃyogātmakaṃ Kaulaṃ Tasmāt Sarvādhikaṃ Priye.

A yogi does not know how to enjoy the good things of life. A person who knows how to enjoy the good things of life is not supposed to be a Yogi. The religion of the Kaulatantra, therefore, is a combination of *Yoga* and *Bhoga*, and is, therefore, the noblest religion.

This was the philosophy behind the wonderful *Mithuna* sculptures on the walls of the temples of Konarak, Puri, and Khajuraho. There is historical and literary evidence of the existence of many sects in these places which not only believed in, but also practised this philosophy.

Numerous nondescript sects of the middle ages followed the *Lokāyata* interpretation of the purpose of life in this world. Materialism grew highly antinomian in such sects as those of the Mattamayuras, the Kapalikas, the Natha-Siddhas, and the Aghoras, who discerned no distinction between what was fresh and what was rotten to the core. A modern Aghora, who lived in Bombay, not only worked as a stock-broker, but also practised his antinomian faith with numerous male and female disciples. (Robert E. Svoboda, *Aghora: At The Left Hand of God*. Calcutta, 1986.) The use of all sorts of substances or *Dravya*, including those which are naturally produced in the human body, in other words, the use of everything pertaining to the earth was considered absolutely essential for the attainment of spiritual liberation.

The *Lokāyata*, which was considered untouchable by the orthodox philosophers, ultimately found accommodation in the theory and practice of such deviant sects as the sects of the Tāntrikas, the Sahajiyās, and the Bauls. It is necessary for us to review the historical reasons behind the transformation of *Lokāyata* into a polymorphous religious system in which different religious concepts were accommodated. We should note that materialism gradually separated itself from *Vitāṇḍavāda* or sophistry, or from purely scholastic arguments concerning the primacy of matter, and became identifiable with mysticism, magic, cults at the level of the grassroots, and the worship of ghosts and demons. This transformation of *Lokāyata* was initially discernible in Tāntrika Buddhism which signified the total repudiation of the highly ethical ideals preached by the Buddha. This happened at a time when Buddhism was no longer a monolithic system based on the original teachings of the Master. It

was assailed by the Hindu Brahmanical revivalists who specifically belonged to the *Mīmāṃsā* school of thought. With the consolidation of quasifeudalism, the Hindu dynastic rulers lent to Brahmanical Hinduism more substantial patronage than to the decadent Buddhist monasteries. In the Brahmanical writings Buddhism was denigrated as the faith of the *Pāṣaṇḍas* or Philistines, who were said to have staged a great conspiracy against the *Varṇa* system and Brahmanical Hinduism. The original precepts of the *Lokāyata*, too, were designated as precepts of the *Pāṣaṇḍas* and in all probability, consigned to the limbo. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that roughly between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries the *Lokāyata* concepts became the theoretical basis of various non-Brahmanical cults, the most prominent of which was Vajrayāna-Sahajayāna Buddhism, and the Nātha-Siddha cult, both of which fastened the greatest emphasis on the use of the human body in spiritual culture. The permanent adjustment between *Lokāyata* and mystical monism, or the permanent assimilation of materialism into various soteriological systems was an inevitable concomitant of the breakdown and ultimate disappearance of numerous dynastic kingdoms, the appearance of invincible Islam in India, the intensification of Brahmanical orthodoxy, the growing popularity of mythology which showed a curious blending of materialism and spiritualism, and the uncertainty which characterized politics, economics, and social life.

Kaula Tāntrika worship was undoubtedly influenced by Vajrayāna Buddhism and the Nātha-Siddha cult. The Hindu and ostensible Brahmanical Kaula Tāntrika was in reality the personification of a strange contradiction which was expressed in the following verse:

Antah Śāktah Vahih Śaivāh Sabhāyām Vaiṣṇavāh Matāh.

Nānārūpadharāh Kaulāh Vicaranti Mahītale.

The Kaula Tāntrika was essentially a Śākta. He was outwardly a Śaiva. In an assembly he was a Vaiṣṇava. He thus wandered in the world in different guises, (and indulged in crass orgiasticism of wine and flesh).

Thanks to the labours of Caitanya and his companions, Vaishnavism became the most popular religion in Bengal in the sixteenth century. A number of Vaishnavas considered it reasonable to deviate from the *Contemplation* (*Smaraṇa*, *Manana* and *Nididhyāsana*) of the so-called *Līla* or 'sports' of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, and emulate the example set by the god. These Vaishnavas were known as Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, who were

considerably influenced by the Tāntrika concepts, and introduced union with the female partner as a basic ritual.

The Bāul religion was a curious combination of Nātha-Siddha Haṭhayoga, Tantricism, Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, and certain Sūfī concepts. As the human body is of the greatest importance in Bāul religious practice, some authorities have described it as a *Vastuvādi* or materialist religion, in which there is hardly any place for Brahmanical speculations. The Bāuls use the substances naturally produced in the human body, and consider sexuality as a basic element in their religious culture.

It is, therefore, apparent that right from the times of the Buddha and Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra to our own times, *Lokāyata* as a belief in the mystic possibilities associated with the human body and life in this world has been a prime factor behind the emergence not only of a famous school of materialism, but also of a number of popular religious sects, which cumulatively represented a popular rebellion against the caste system and the Brahmanical world-view, and left a lasting impress on philosophy, literature, and various forms of art.

REFERENCES

Texts (In Sanskrit):

- Madhavacarya, *Sarvadarsanasamgraha* (Pune 1940.) *Sarvamatasamgraha*, ed. Mahamahopadhyaya T. Ganapati Sastri (Trivandrum 1918).
Sarvasiddhantasamgraha, ed. Premsundar Basu (Calcutta 1929).
 Jayarasi Bhatta, *Tattvopaplavasimha* (Baroda).

Other Works (In Bengali):

- Akshayakumar Datta, *Bharatavarshiya Upasaka Sampradaya*, 2 vols. (Calcutta 1987).
 Dakshinaranjan Sastri, *Carvaka Darsan* (Calcutta 1989. 2nd. ed.).
 Latika Chattopadhyay, *Carvaka Darsana* (Calcutta 1995).
 Deviprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Carvaka Darsana* (Calcutta 1956).
 -- *Bharate Vastuvad Prasange* (Calcutta 1987).
 Upendranath Bhattacharya, *Banglar Baul o Baul Gan* (Calcutta 1378 BE).
 Sudhir Chakravarti, *Vratya, Lokayata, Lalana* (Calcutta 1992).

Saktinath Jha, *Vastuvadi Baul* (Calcutta 1999).

English Works:

Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vols. I-III (Cambridge 1921-25).

P. T. Raju, *The Philosophical Traditions of India* (London 1971).

Haraprasad Sastri, *Lokayata* (Dhaka 1925).

A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ajivikas* (Delhi 1981. Reprint).

D. P. Chatterji, *Lokayata* (New Delhi 1959).

D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay 1975. 2nd ed.).

J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (Delhi 1967. Reprint.).

Sasibhushan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta 1962).

Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago 1967).

Jeannine Auboyer, *Daily Life in India from 200 BC to 700 AD* (Delhi 1961).

Louis Dumont, *Religion, Politics and History in India* (Mouton 1970).

Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy: a counter perspective*. (Delhi 1992).

ARAB-ENGLISH POETRY: LITERARY CONTACTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Troubadours, the Concept of Courtly Love and the Arabic Contribution

The theory that the Arabs had a remarkable contribution to mediaeval Romance culture in general, and to its poetry in particular has had a history of its own. It seems to be one of the reasons why Sir William Jones made a comparative study of the peculiar similarity of ideas and images between Eastern poetry and that of Petrarch.¹ In Murphy's celebrated History of Spanish culture which was based mainly on Escorial Mss. and the erudite history of literature by G. Andres (1782-99), the same theory is strongly suggested.² The debate has been revived in our century giving rise to a lively controversy regarding the origin of the idea of courtly love and of rhyme.

The very existence in the Middle Ages of the Islamic block was an important factor in the development of the West.³ This striking factor has been noted by Grunebaum⁴ in his study of the East-West cultural encounter: the East was able to assimilate and enrich the patterns of sentiment and psychological insight which they had inherited from the Greeks and which they had transmitted to the West. The affinities between the East and the West stand out in the part played by the East in the growth of Western sensibility. And one of the results of Eastern participation seems to be a refinement of the concept of Courtly Love and its artistic expression.

We may be permitted to deal briefly with the following questions : what is Courtly Love? and how was it related to Arab poetry? A contributor to *Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature* has defined Courtly Love thus: it is a "disparate phenomenon arising out of the confluences of various literary and philosophical traditions, and its definition would vary, to some extent, depending on the provenance of the mediaeval texts under discussion".⁵ He further says, "Scholars have

traced Arabic influences in the modes of expression employed by the troubadour poets of the 12th century France.”⁶ It has been characterised more incisively by another scholar. Roger Boase (he is referred to in the *Bloomsbury Guide*, 435) as “a comprehensive cultural phenomenon...which arose in an aristocratic Christian environment exposed to Hispano-Arabic influences.”⁷ Modern historians of English Literature are not as hesitating as the earlier ones regarding Arab component in the concept of European Courtly poetry. In *Literature and Western Civilization: The Mediaeval World*, in as many as three articles, it is shown that there were clear traces of Arab elements in Mediaeval European troubadour poetry.⁸ This literary and poetic convention was popularised in Europe by Provençal Troubadours, and one cannot miss the evidence of this convention in some of the major mediaeval poets and writers of fictions including Bernard de Ventadorn, Guillaume IX de Poitiers, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Cavalcanti, Dante, Petrarch, Chaucer, John Gower, Malory etc. It figured prominently in some Renaissance writers also e.g. Spenser.

The main features of this conception of love — the sovereignty of the beloved, the fidelity and submission of the lover, secrecy, interdependence of love and poetry, and the ennobling, yet to some extent destructive nature of love,— are found to have already existed in the Arabic poetic tradition of chaste love (Ar: “al-hubb al udhri”). This tradition of love was imported into southern France by musicians, singing girls, captives and slaves. Another channel was the northern Kingdom of Sicily. The unsuspected parallels in ideas and expression that exist between the conception of love in southern France and Muslim Spain, cannot be explained by coincidence or polygenesis. Let us have some examples with regard to at least one point of similarity.

There was a period of splendour that blossomed in southern and south-western France from the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. There is an elaborate treatment of Arab involvement in European Troubadours in Grunbaum’s learned article, “The Arab contribution to Troubadour Poetry”.⁹ There he cites some examples of an exuberant spirit which was reflected in the joyfulness that permeated so many of the greatest poems of the Provençaux. Gillaume de Poitiers (d. 1127), the first of the troubadours, says:

Happy to be in love. I wish to plunge myself even deeper into this joy. And since I wish to regain the perfect joy I shall have to woo the most perfect of women. Never there was a man, moved by the strength of desire, able to imagine, the thought or dream, a joy like mine. This joy is unequalled on earth, and whoever would sing it worthily would have to spend a year before succeeding. ¹⁰

There was a similar mood which entered Spanish Zajal poetry at about the same time, if not earlier. Ibn Quzman (d. 1160), the greatest master in popularising the Strophic poetry, says:

O you who fill me with joy whenever I see you...

and in the end he says:

My love, I am gay, I am clapping my hands.... I am not afraid of worries that might assail me, nor of hardship (which) time might bring on me.... I have made peace with my ill luck. ¹¹

Many urban verses, eastern and western, have dedicated the transport of joy to singing of "tarab" (an Arabic word : musical instrument). ¹² It may be pointed out that Arabic poetry offered some precedents for the expressions of the radiant joy of life, the dominant theme in provençal poetry. But Peter Dronke is one of those critics which state that the parallels between Mediaeval Spanish and European love poetry are coincidental. ¹³ And C. S. Lewis, the author of the celebrated *Allegory of Love* speaks slightly of the Arab involvement in European love poetry. ¹⁴ But there is impressive documentation to prove that before the twelfth century, Arabic poetry, or poetry influenced by Arab lyrical tradition, seemed to contain almost all of the essential features of Courtly Love.

But what is the literary evidence of cultural exchange or transmission to confirm the Andalusian involvement? As a result of important political or economic changes in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, fresh fields of encounter between Europe and Islam were opened up. From the end of the ninth century a new relationship grew up between the Kingdom of Navarre and the caliphate of Cordova. Abd-al-Rahaman II (822-852 A.D.) had a Navarrese girl in his court named Qalam. She had been trained in Madina to sing, dance and memorise verses. Al-Hakam I who was also a poet described himself in a poem:

Humble demeanor behoves a free man
Whenever he becomes a slave through love.¹⁵

His son Abdl. Allah (888 - 912 AD), also a poet, married Ouneca or Iniga, a navarrese Princess. He father, Fortune Garcis of Pamplona (c. 882-905), spent about twenty years as a hostage in Cordova. Ouneca's son, Muhammad, married a Christian girl, Maria, between 888-890; she was the mother of Abd-al-Rahaman III (929-961). His son al-Hakan II (961-976), with a grand library rich with about 4 lacs of volumes of important books, also married a Navarrese girl, Aurora, or Subh, i.e. dawn. Another girl who was offered in marriage to the ruler al-Mansur (980-1002) became a zealous convert to Islam. These diplomatic and marital links were arranged through highly cultured ambassadors. Many of them were poets, and they seemed to have some knowledge of romance languages. All these facts are enough evidence of a cultural encounter between Arab and European love poetry.¹⁶

One of the major literary outcomes of this cultural encounter is the impact of Arab poetry on European lovepoetry in respect of both theme and form. Nykl in his elaborate treatment, in *Hispano-arabic Poetry and its Relation with the old Provencal Troubadours* of the probable impact of Andalusian poetry has given some illustrations from the poems of Guillaume IX de Poitiers.¹⁷ By giving an account of the personal life of Guillaume IX and by analysing and comparing his poems composed before and after his Crusading expedition Nykl comes to the conclusion that there is a marked change in the spirit and technique of his poetry after his return from the Crusading journey to the East (1101-1102). After his return from the Holy Land, the rhythm and the general structure of his songs suddenly became strongly reminiscent of the Muwashshah and Zajal.¹⁸ Marcabru (d. 1185), Piere de Auvergne (d. 1180), two other important exponents of the new style, went to Spain and proved receptive to Andalusian influences.¹⁹ We may consider some of the areas where these influences were operative.

So far as theme is concerned one of the most important features of Courtly Love is the lover's attitude of submission. We may quote some lines from Bernard de Ventadorn's poem:

Good lady, I ask of you nothing more than that you take me
as your servant.

I will serve you as a I would a good lord, whatever I may
receive as the reward.²⁰

Similarly, Guillaume IX asks his beloved to register his name in the charter of his slaves, saying that he will yield to her whatever case she may bring against him.²¹

Among Arab poets the name of al-Abbas bin al-Ahnaf (d. 806) immediately comes to our mind:

I am your slave, torment me
if you will.
Or whatever you will of me,
do it, whatever it is!²²

Again from al-Ahnaf:

Accept my love, I give it as a gift !
Then reward me with rejection, that is love.
This soul of mine is given to you
The best gift demands no return.²³

It has been said that al-Abbas is unique in his steadfastness which he had shown to his lady-love. Referring to the example of al-Hakam Ibn Huzm wrote:

Submission in love is not odious,
For in love the proud humbles himself.
Do not be surprised at my docility in my condition;
For before me al-Mustansir has suffered the same lot.²⁴

Al Hakam I (d. 822), a contemporary of al-Abbas bin al-Ahnaf wrote:

A King am I, subdued, his power humbled
To love, like a captive in fetters, forlorn!...
Excessive love has made him a slave,
Though before that he was a mighty king!
If he weeps, complains of love, more unjustly
They treat, eschew him, bring him near his death!²⁵

There is yet another field where the Troubadours and the Arab poets had much in common: the mixture of pain and delight. Ibn Quzman, the acknowledged master of Zajal poetry echoed a long line of previous Arab poets

This love, how sweet it is, and how bitter! How ugly is neglect and how contemptible! How the lover saddens and how he gladdens again! For what guilt is it the poor lover incurs neglects! ²⁶

As for the Troubadours, Bernard de Ventadorn has much to say of alternation of joy and pain, and Guillaume de Cabestang speaks of love that it is an evil but it is sweet and pleasing. ²⁷

But the blend of earthly and heavenly traits in the portrayal of the beloved, was as important a characteristic in the Arabic poetry of the Middle Ages as the combination of pain and joy. And in the meadiaeval European love poetry one cannot miss this curious blend of the sensuous and spiritual love, towards which the Arab poets had something substantial to contribute. And one is tempted to refer to the love poetry of Petrarch and Dante, whose relation with Arabic literary tradition is marked by animated controversy among scholars. So it is imperative for us to identify at first the nature and sources of this relation, if any, with Arabic literature. (There is a fairly good analysis of Dante's relation with Arabic philosophical tradition by competent authorities like Norman Daniel and R.W. Southern.)

We may consider some elements of the love-poetry of Dante and Petrarch to find if there was any trace of the convention of Arab love poetry of the Middle Ages. Avicenna in his Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* cited some specimens from Arabic poetry, which were translated into Latin in Toledo in 1256 by Hermanus Alemmanus; this text was probably the source of Petrarch's remarks about Arabic poetry. ²⁸ It is something interesting that a Ms copy of a Dictionary of Latin-Persian-Kumani (an old Turkish dialect) was found in the library of Petrarch and was known as *Codex Cummanicus*. ²⁹ Courthope as long back as 1906 suggested strongly that

the many resemblances between Petrarch's sonnets and such a poem, for example, as a *Divan* of Ibn Farid (d. 1230)... make it almost incredible that the two classes of poetry should have sprung from two completely distinct sources of inspiration. ³⁰

In 1923 Leonard Chalmers Hunt paraphrased some wine songs of Ibn Farid and others and rendered them into English. In a foreword about Sufism Alexander Sefi says:

The poet (Ibn Farid) wishes to express his ecstasy at the sight of the Universe, and his love for that beauty which is above all other beauty. But literally he says,

'Mine eye's hand gave me the fiery wine of love to drink'

'My cup was the lovely face surpassing all loveliness.'¹

W.H. Drapper, in the same collection says, there are

curious parallels in the Arabic poet's thoughts which show that East and West have meeting points other than that of admiration for strength and bravery. They meet in the presence of Nature Visible.¹²

Now something about the alleged similarity in the treatment of eschatological ideas between Dante and some Arab and Persian thinkers. There is an extensive study of this analogy from different standpoints in Asin Palacios's *Islam and The Divine Comedy*.¹³ He has placed some challenging arguments that the *Divine Comedy* documents Dante's familiarity with some Islamic source-materials. But Asin's speculations were exposed to some virile criticism. Only in the second half of the present century his arguments seem to be vindicated. Of the entire development Gabrielli says,

It would now seem to be at least possible, if not probable, that Dante may have known the Liber Scalae and have taken from it certain images and concepts of Muslim eschatology thus providing confirmation of Asin Palacios's bold theory.¹⁴

It is interesting to observe in this connection that R.A. Nicholson, the great Perso-Arabic scholar, has thrown some new light on the surprising parallels between *Sair-ul-Ibad ila al-Mad* (Journey of God's Servants Towards the Underworld) by Hakim Sanai, the great Persian poet of the thirteenth century, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* and has thought that these parallels were not accidental.¹⁵ Apart from that, so far as metrical structure is concerned, Courthope quotes from the two stanzas of Arabic Muwashshah cited by Michael Amari in his celebrated *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (History of the Mussalmans of Sicily). Vol. iii, and compares them with the two stanzas of Dante's *Canzone* (Il Sanzoiera, Parte Seconda, Sanzone vii) and comes to the conclusion,

So close a resemblance of metrical structure can scarcely have been the result of accident.¹⁶

All this body of facts, even if they seem at times to be vaguely shaped — gives some idea that Arabic literature was not completely a sealed book to Dante. So, the combination of sensuous and spiritual love, an idea of love for the unattainable, and a tendency of looking at the beloved clothed in divine beauty, might have entered, through some channel, the mind and imagination of Dante. And the concept of Beatrice might not be a product exclusively of European imagination; she seems to fulfil the idea of early Perso-Arabic poets about the blend of sensuous and spiritual love. The idea of Beatrice comes nearest to Rumi's concept of the beloved as the ray of mystic light. R.A. Nicholson does not completely rule out the comparison between Rumi and Dante (Rumi's junior contemporary), for Dante's poetry, like Rumi's *Masnawi*, reflects some "universal principles and eternal realities" which underlie the external forms of sensuous beauty.^{16a}

Now this elevating power of love which was nobly displayed in the poetry of Dante and Petrarch, was a broad literary field of Arabic amatory poetry in the early Middle Ages. It forms an integral part in Al Abbas bin al-Ahnaf's concept of love. The spirit of his love-poetry is that the two bodies of the lover and the beloved may have to bear separation, but nobody can prevent the union of two souls. He says,

God has mixed her soul with mine, so that the two are become
one in my body.

Again:

The body continues to live as long as they (the two souls) are
together, but as soon as they separate, the body will die.¹⁷

One may be impressed with this spirit of combination of earthly and divine love in the poetry of al-Abbas bin al-Ahnaf:

O you who ask about Fauz (prize) and her appearance (form);
if you have not seen her, look at the moon.

But at the next moment he comes out of conventional hyperbole in Arab poetry and makes Fauz transcend the limit of the concept of human life:

It is as though Paradise were her dwelling-place, and as though
she had come to mankind as a revelation (Arabic "Wahi") and
an example.¹⁸

In such passages it is revealed that both in Arabic poetry and European

poetry the personal lyric has come very close to mystical ecstasy. The passage from al-Abbas's poetry just quoted reminds us of the phrase "the sovereign beatitude" expressed by Petrarch, and Dante believed that he had beheld it in the eyes of Beatrice.

Later Provençal poetry had one other feature which was identical with Arabic love-poetry; the beloved was addressed both in masculine and feminine terms: *midons* or *dompna* corresponding exactly to "maulaya" (my leader: male) and "sayyidati" (my leader: female)³⁹. This is in evidence in *The Knight in the Tiger Skin* by Sotha Rusthveli (twelfth century), which is one of the highest specimens of Courtly Love in the Middle Ages. Thamara herself is called a god, "ghmetri", — everywhere there is the lady's lordship over her lover.

But there were similarities on other points too. The general temper of al-Abbas's poetry and that of Bernard de Ventadorn (c 1150) may be compared.

Al-Abbas:

What is the sad lover to do who has been treated
harshly by those he loves?
There is nothing for him but patience
until he died of his ailment.
Or recovers from his pains when he
retired into solitude with his tears?⁴⁰

Bernard de Ventadorn:

In good faith and without after thought do I love the most
beautiful and the most noble lady. My heart heaves sighs, my
eyes shed tears, for I love her too much and suffer too much
thereby. But what can I do? Love has taken possession of me
and put me in a prison, which only one key may open — mercy.
And mercy my lady will not show me.⁴¹

This lady without mercy reminds us of Keat's famous poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci". The idea of this lady without mercy is found in both the East and the West.

Around 1022 Ibn Hazm, one of the first students of comparative religion, wrote an analysis of love in a book, *Tawq al Hamama* (the Dove's Necklace). The book describes in a lively way almost all the types of amatory experiences. The editor of Chaucer tries to discover the echo of this amatory experience in the poetry of Chaucer.⁴² Ibn

Hazm has dealt with numerous symptoms of love and love psychology in great detail. His treatment is so comprehensive that

With Ibn Hazm we may say, the level of subtilization is reached on which the best of the Troubadours were to move, and the fund of the psychological truths assembled with which they are to operate and to develop further.⁴³

A. R. Nykl makes a fine distinction between Ovid and Ibn Hazm. Both dealt with the art of love-making, but

Ovid is a sensual clever dandy.... Ibn Hazm is fine — feeling seeker of the spiritual union... he (Ibn Hazm) preserves the original Platonic and Sufi spirit, whereas Ovid makes of love largely a motive power for committing refined excesses.⁴⁴

Modern scholars, of course, are not as much critical of Ovid in this respect. In *Ovid Reviewed*, a collection of essays, a writer refers in some detail to Ovidian traces in the fifteenth and sixteenth century European poets who had a Platonic tinge of the idea of a combination of earthly and higher love. But even if the writer admits that "Spain was the country most affected" by lyric poets of love soaring above earth (p. 41), he does not pause to consider the part played by Ibn Hazm.⁴⁵ The writer refers to Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) (p. 39) and his relation with Plato's writings, but he does not mention that Ficino was a "physician familiar with Arab theories concerning the malady of love".⁴⁶ By citing some parallels (and Boas assures that he can cite "countless further examples") Boas tries to demonstrate that Provencal Troubadours and European poets in general were influenced by Arabic poetry and treatises of love, either "directly or indirectly". If early translation of Arabic poetry into the Romance languages is not generally ascertained,* one cannot rule out possibilities of oral transmission. Boas quotes in his Appendix passages showing affinities between Arabic and European love-poetry and comes to this conclusion:

Although we do find passage in Ovid on the bitter-sweet nature of love, we do not find anything comparable to Ibn Hazm's psychological insights.⁴⁷

* It is from the Latin translation (1256) of some Arabic poems cited in Ibn Sina's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* that Petrarch might have been acquainted with Arabic poetry; *vide* n. 28 of this chapter.

But mediaeval Spain contributed in some other ways to the formation of Provençal Troubadour poetry : the prosodic richness of its popular songs. Strophic forms may be said to have been cultivated in Spain with increasing zeal after Muqaddam bin al-Mu'ata al-Qabri (c 900) had invented the "Muwashshah".⁴⁸ Nykl revealed with much convincing method of parallels and comparisons the influence of Hispano-Arabic forms on the lyric poetry of the provençal Troubadours in addition to that of minstrels who used Spanish and Portuguese. The painstaking labour of Nykl and other scholars in comparing the strophic arrangement of Muwashshah and Zajal with the prosodic details in general has thrown fresh light on the amazing extent of borrowings of the form-patterns of the Arabic lyric poetry by the European poets of the Middle Ages.⁴⁹ Nykl was "certain that there was ample possibility for Guillaume or Marcabru to obtain translation of songs".⁵⁰ They imitated "those melodies and rhymes in their own language without mentioning the source".⁵¹

All this simply suggests that there was not a glass-curtain between the East and the West in some field of literary traditions and that there was a mutual understanding between them in ideas and conventions in poetry and literature of the period in general. And this was achieved through some process of acculturation which has sociological significance apart from literary, not generally emphasised by the competent historians of mediaeval literature, excepting, of course, authors like Dorothee Metlitzki and Michael Swanton.

Symbiosis in Mediaeval Spain

Mediaeval Spain was celebrated for cultural encounter producing copious gifts which enrich the East and the West alike. Let me start with Peter

Grunebaum, acknowledging the discoveries of Nykl emphasises at the end of his learned article "The Arab Contribution to Troubadour Poetry": "And through this heritage, we still draw from the experience of those Arab lovers and poets who first uncovered unsuspected recesses of our hearts, which, but for them, might have remained unexplored; "vide *Themes in Mediaeval Arabic Literature*, 151. Courthope says, "...taking into account the popularity of the Mowassehat among the Arabs, it is a fair conclusion that it first suggested to the poets of Sicily and South Italy the idea of metres with interlacing rhymes." Courthope, Vol. I, 77.

Dronke again. Though he exhibits a strong opposition to the theory of Arab contribution both to the growth of *amour courtois* or Courtly Love, and to the theory of Arabic origin of the strophic arrangement of some of the Mediaeval Courtly poems, he admits:

If it (the theory of Arab origin of the concept of Courtly Love) draws attention to historical situation in Spain and Sicily, to the abundant evidence of a bilingual society in which over a long period Moslem and Christian poets and singers met continually and naturally knew each other's songs; if it shows that elegant and sophisticated Arabic Andalusian poetry at times carries themes of *amour courtois*; if, seeing the recorded evidence of the passage of collection of stories, philosophical and scientific texts, even theological and mystical ones, from the Arabs to the West, one infers as a matter of course that songs also made this passage, that oral transmission surely existed at every stage alongside written — all this I think is important and true.⁵²

This clear recognition of Arab involvement from one of the critics of Arab theory of Courtly Love is enough indication of the cultural interaction between the Arabs and Europe in the Middle Ages, and this was particularly true of Spain. Long before the advent of Islam in Spain there was at Seville a "leading intellectual centre of Christian Europe established by Isidore" (d. 636).⁵³ Yet for a number of reasons suggested by Watt⁵⁴ this Isidorian tradition lost ground and there was a growing acceptance of the Arabs and Arabic literature in Spain. The Mozarabs or Christians under Muslim rule had remarkable fascination for Arab culture, its language and literature. "Within a decade of Tariq's landing at Gibraltar in 711 the language of Koran was used among the Christians of Spain".⁵⁵ The cultural interaction between Muslims and Christians for several centuries was evidenced by the fact that Alphonso VI, the Conqueror of Toledo (1085) had married an Arab girl⁵⁶ as Abdur Rahaman II, Hakam I, Hakam II and some other Cordovan Khalifs married Christian girls some centuries earlier.⁵⁷ All this refers strongly to a vigorous study of Arabic language and literature by Christians. There is a faithful contemporary record:

Our Christian young men, with their elegant airs and fluent speech, are showy in their dress and carriage, and are famed for the learning of the gentiles : intoxicated with the Arab eloquence

they greedily handle, eagerly devour and zealously discuss the books of the Chaldeans (i.e. Muhammedans), and make them known by praising them with every flourish of rhetoric knowing nothing of the beauty of the Church's literature, and looking down with contempt on the streams of the Church that flow forth from Paradise; alas! the Christians are so ignorant of their own law, the Latins pay so little attention to their own language, that in the whole Christian block there is hardly one man in a thousand who can write a letter to inquire after a friend's health intelligibly while you may find a countless rabble of all kinds of them who can learnedly roll out the grandiloquent periods of the Chaldean tongue. They can even make poems, every line ending with the same letter which display high flights of beauty and more skill in handling metre than the gentiles themselves possess.⁴⁸

A modern interpreter of the symptoms of the period in question analyses the facts referred to in the passage:

In the midst of a brilliant and flourishing civilization with its Arabic literature and its genial virtues, it was inevitable that the temper of the Christian population should become relaxed. This had happened in the end wherever Islam was established, and it was happening in Spain.⁴⁹

The lengthy quotation from the passage written by Paul Alvarus offers enough suggestion of cultural interaction between the Muzarabs and the Muslims in Spain. And it is very interesting in this connection to note the growth and development of Muwashshah and Zajal in the poetic tradition of Muslim Spain which came nearest to the concept of symbiosis of cultures.

The culture of Muslim Spain except in the sphere of sharp religious difference between two communities, was received and shared by its inhabitants irrespective of race and religion. Montgomery Watt styles it as "amalgam" and claims that from this amalgam "the new poetic forms developed which were one of the chief original contributions of al-Andalus to the heartlands."⁵⁰ He of course does not minimise the role of scholars in this respect. It is a complex cultural relationship which was operative in the phenomenon of the Troubadours and the development of some of the social conditions associated with chivalry. It is not easy to make a comfortable distinction between Oriental and European strands of characteristics in Spain in the second stage (in the

earlier stage there was definitely an Oriental stamp), for the fusion seemed to be almost complete.⁶¹ And it is for this cultural fusion that Greek philosophy reached Christian Europe through Arab mediation; the intellectual exercises of Averroes along with his profound interpretation of Aristotle provided some sparks (of course not all) in the West which proved instrumental and invigorative for the development of European philosophical and theological tradition in the Middle Ages.⁶²

Against this social and cultural background one should explain the growth and development of the strophic forms of poetry, the Muwashshah ("ornamented") and the Zajal, ("happy noise or song", Spanish, "Zejel") which were the "original contribution of al-Andalus to Arabic poetry".⁶³ These poems are Hispano-Arabic in nature and have received elaborate treatment in Nykl's thought-provoking collection and interpretation.⁶⁴ But long before Nykl, Ibn Khaldun, the great historian, made a fairly long discussion of Muwashshah and Zajal in his celebrated *Muqaddima*.⁶⁵ For the detailed recent history of the origin and development of Muwashshah and Zajal and their contributory role, whether supposed or real, in the development of strophic poetry in Romance languages, there is a rewarding study in the *Cambridge History of Islam*,⁶⁶ *A Handbook of Oriental Studies*,⁶⁷ S. M. Stern's posthumous book *Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry*,⁶⁸ Maria Rosa Menocal's *The Arabic Role in Mediaeval Literary History. A Forgotten Heritage*,⁶⁹ to refer to a few.

One should take note of another curious experience in the reading of Arabic Muwashshah and Zajal poetry and of Mozarabic Kharjas composed in the Arabic-Spanish dialect: there is a number of non-Arabic, mostly Spanish, words in the Zajals, and some Arabic words in the Mozarabic Kharjas ("envoi"). This tendency had of course an illuminating social implication. In Nykl's collections of the Zajals of Ibn Quzman and some other poets, there are certain Romance words; for example in Zajal No. CII⁷⁰ there are some Romance words and phrases: "ye no os atarey fer una calibo", and the line means: I shall not tie you in order to make you a prisoner", and another: "Alba alba es da faz de una diye", "which is almost identical with certain Galician songs ... the phrase "alba alba" etc. is the only one pointing to a similarity with the Galician *lirica romanceada*."⁷¹

Similarly some of the Mozarabic Kharjas, illustrated by Dronke contain a few Arabic words -- peculiar reminders of Troubadour tradition:

there are words like "al-habib" (the beloved) ⁷¹, "sidi" (= saiyidi: my lord), ⁷² "ya sidi" (o my lord), ⁷³ "li 'l raqib" (for the spy or rival lover), ⁷⁴ "al-gilala" (bodice or the gown), ⁷⁵ "bi-nafsi" (by my soul), ⁷⁶ "ya rabb" (O Lord). ⁷⁷ The spelling and correct use of the Arabic words by the non-Muslim poets, unlike the Latin corruptions of many Arabic words in the Middle Ages suggest that they were very much acquainted not only with Arabic vocables, but with Arabian poetry and culture in general. Dronke recorded these poems bearing the Arabic words; it would have been happier if he had explained the significance of these Arabic words in Spanish poems. This modest survey refers to vigorous encounter of the East and the West in respect of the nature of Troubadour poetry and the concept of Courtly Love. We may now consider the encounter of European Romances and Perso-Arabic Romances in the Middle Ages.

A Note on Cultural Encounter in Mediaeval Romances

In some mediaeval Romances too, there were traces of encounter of European and Perso-Arabic (mainly Arabic) culture and literary traditions. Some of these romances were legends inspired by the real struggle between Christians and Saracens, and the spirit of the Crusades. The image of the Arab World seemed to the English poets and writers of the time to be a strange blend of fancy and horrible heap of false details. This was history embroidered with legends. Some of the Romances were prompted by Christian hatred against Islam, the direct outcome of crusading wars. In these Romances what was expressed with strong emphasis was the triumph of Christianity over Islam. There were certain common motifs: the Saracens were giants and they were to be killed by Christian heroes; the amir was to be defeated and the Saracen converted to a Christian Knight. These points are elaborated by Rana Kabbani in *Europe's Myths of the Orient*. ⁷⁸ Rana Kabbani's approach to the mediaeval romances as the expression only of the triumph of Christian valour and virtues over their Muslim counterparts has shaded the Western psychological complex secretly at work. The point which she seems to have overlooked, and which Edward Said thinks out of context and so ignores, the mediaeval romance was a historical

experience; it developed along with profound intellectual pursuits and complex political activities, and "all centered on the assimilation of the legacy of Islam."⁷⁹ In the encounter between the Arabs and the Christendom, if we attempt to examine the role of Arabic themes in Mediaeval romance, we must remember that we are dealing with a world of concrete reality of powerful mediaeval life. "The caricature of this Saracen presence in the popular mediaeval romances was a way of coping emotionally with a real threat,"⁸⁰ not merely political, but intellectual. They tried to belittle the Saracens, for, at bottom, they had to admit the cultural superiority of their rivals of whom they were jealous. So Dorothee Metlitzki seems to be nearer to the historical reality of the psychology of encounter. A number of mediaeval Romances with varieties of motifs and varying degree of hatred and disharmony has found a detailed unbiased analysis in her *The Matter of Araby in Mediaeval England*.⁸¹ I shall now consider some Mediaeval Romances where Perso-Arabic and European cultural and literary traditions stood close together throwing silent admonitions to the meaningless passion of war running high in the contemporary world.

Floris and Blanchefleur

Against the mediaeval background of ambivalence and a strong note of disharmony there was a beautiful romance shining like a bright luminary: *Floris and Blanchefleur*. There is an aristocratic Arab society where Floris is the son of the Arab King of Spain, and Blanchefleur is the daughter of a captive Christian slave-girl. Retold in different European languages the thirteenth century middle English version seemed to follow a twelfth-century French version. — this lovely story of childhood love between Floris and Blanchefleur became as popular as that of *Tristram and Iseult*. My object is to project this romance as the meeting-point of two otherwise alien cultures — two ways of life, Muslim and Christian.

Although there is not direct Arabic parallel to Floris and Blanchefleur, yet in this web of varieties of motifs, one can easily discover Eastern parallels. S S Geddes finds some parallel with the *Arabian Nights* story of Nia'mah and Naomi.⁸² One may consult Burton's edition of the *Arabian Nights* which produces a convincing idea of the parallels. It is unfortunate that Rana Kabbani who intends to show in *Europe's Myths*

of the Orient the "Lewd Saracens", could see nothing beyond an instance of eastern voluptuosness in the Romance.⁸⁴ But it was more than that. Michael Swanton in a detailed analysis of that story, its structure and sentiment, and its distinctiveness against a mediaeval setting finds many qualities which are unique in mediaeval romance tradition.⁸⁵ As in *Sir Tristram* there are refined sentiments: honour, amour, anguisse, beauté and belami; Floris is lovesick at separation; his nights are sleepless and his appetite gone causing loss of physical strength. But Swanton observes a marked difference between the symptoms expressed in *Sir Tristram* and those in *Floris and Blanchefleur*. The latter is witness "to its thoroughgoing Islamic counterpart as represented by the eleventh century Hispano-Arabic treatise on love by Ibn Hazm,⁸⁶ who had himself fallen in love with a youthful playmate with whom he had been brought up."⁸⁷

In some other details there are clear echoes of eastern Romances: here are a boy and a girl with a significantly linked name; they are brought up together in their early formative period and fall in love with each other. Reference is made to a false tomb to persuade a lover that his beloved is dead,⁸⁸ a prince is found searching his beloved that learns of her from merchants in an inn; a lover enters into a harem by hiding himself in a chest; there is a competition between the surprised detected lovers to be slain first, but they are ultimately saved, etc.⁸⁹ There are features of contemporary eastern courts. It is coupled with the arrangement of sophisticated Byzantine automata much used by romance writers to give an idea of the image of the East.

The marriage-scene between Floris and Blanchefleur is remarkable in many respects. The couple's love extends its sweet influence over all the people known to them. The young lovers are forgiven by the amir. He gives up his proprietorial rights and gets them married in the church. We do not experience, neither can we expect, any harmony between two different religions (Floris belongs to Islam and Blanchefleur to Christianity); but there is a happy symptom — a plea for religious toleration, very strange indeed against a background of sustained antagonism between two religious systems. This "happy ending" is unique and unparalleled in mediaeval European Romances.⁹⁰ "The romance of Floris and Blanchefleur aspires to the highest human ideal, perfect love, which is romantic in its essence because it sublimely disregards the experience of reality."⁹¹

Floris and Blanchefleur is famous also in its association with Boccaccio's *Filocolo* (c. 1336) and *Il Filostrato* (c. 1338). Boccaccio was sent by his father to Naples to make his fortune there in business. Boccaccio fell in love with a young woman Maria d'Aquino. Unhappy in marriage, Boccaccio was requested and commissioned by Maria to put into courtly Italian the well-known story *Floris and Blanchefleur*, and the result was *Filocolo*, the prose work in five Books. She inspired all his Romances. In *Il Filostrato* also, Boccaccio drew suggestion from the Romance *Floris and Blanchefleur* either from his own treatment in *Filocolo*, or from its Eastern sources.⁹²

This note of love, harmony and understanding was sounded by a remarkable man, a Bavarian minstrel, Wolfram von Eschenbach. He posed some fundamental questions which touch our soul even today — they are astonishing against the mediaeval background:

Is it not a sin to slaughter like cattle people who have never heard of Christianity? I would even say it was a grievous sin, for all the men who speak the seventy-two tongues are God's creatures.⁹³

His romance *Perzival* is interesting in this connection. Wolfram professes that the main source of *Perzival* was an Arabic account that the enigmatic Kyot, a Provençal poet, discovered at Toledo.⁹⁴

Tristram and Iseult

A word or two about *Tristram and Iseult*, one of the major love-romances in the Middle Ages. There are certain narrative motifs in Tristram romance which reminds us of eastern conventions.⁹⁵ It may even be related to *Apollonius of Tyre*, a Byzantine Romance which might have been "transmitted to England whether direct from Byzantium or through Arab intermediaries in the Mediterranean land".⁹⁶

Tristram and Iseult is famous from another point of view. There are "astonishing parallels" between this story and that of *Vis Wa Ramin*, an eleventh century monument of Courtly Love by the Persian poet Gurgani.⁹⁷ Dronke tries to take into account the similarities between these two Romances with deep insight and sympathy. He likes to concentrate more on the "attitude to love that emerges" than on the similarities in plot. He further suggests a profound resemblance between *Tristram and Iseult* and *Vis Wa Ramin*, on which, he claims, "no one

has yet commented". He is very emphatic about this resemblance:

Here in two major works a story of unique love, love that resists all obstacles, and all other loyalties, is given a philosophical dimension... Any future comparison of the two stories must, I am convinced, take this extraordinary achievement, the complete poetic fusion of a love-story with a metaphysic of love, into account.⁹⁸

Indeed, Franz Rosenthal, in his scholarly article "Literature" in *The Legacy of Islam*, while pointing out that the additional theme of the two Iseults, Iseult the Beautiful and Iseult of the white Hand, has been traced in a story about Qays bin Dharir and his two Lubnas, reported in the Book of Songs (*Kitab al Aghani*) of Abul Faraj al Isfahani, remains completely silent over the note of similarities suggested by Dronke.⁹⁹

The Knight in the Tiger Skin

Vis Wa Ramin has the distinction of having left an impact not only upon *Tristram and Iseult* but also upon *The Knight in the Tiger Skin*, a twelfth century Georgian epic Romance by Sotha Rusth'velli. Through a Georgian prose intermediary based on a Persian poem (*Vis Wa Ramin*) by Gurgani, a court-official of the Selucid ruler Toghrul Beg. In the twelfth century, Gurgani's poem give rise to a Georgian prose adaptation. At the court of the Georgian Queen Tamara it achieved a renown almost equal to that of Rusth'velli's romance.¹⁰⁰ In a number of places in his romance Rusth'velli refers to *Vis Wa Ramin*, and he seems to be under this firm conviction that they were the embodiment of true devoted love.¹⁰¹ Unlike *Floris and Blanchefleur* and *Tristram and Iseult*, there is a recorded evidence in the *The Knight in the Tiger Skin* given by the poet himself, of his debt to the Persian poem *Vis Wa Ramin*. The poet admits in the beginning:

The Persian tale, now done into Georgian.

There is another internal evidence to show that the poet was familiar with Arabian and Persian poetry. When he says,

Neither Quassi, nor even Salaman could bear sorrows like this¹⁰²

he refers to Nizami's *Laila and Majnun*, where the hero is Quais and to Jami's *Salaman and Absal*.¹⁰³ Rusth'velli was also acquainted with

Firdausi's *Shahnamah*; he refers to Rustam ¹⁰⁴ (one of the great heroes of *Shahnamah*) as model of a great heroic valour. One may find an image of Rustam in the conception and execution of heroic valour in his own Romance. Rusth'velli employs numerous Persian fables and images and many Perso-Arabic words in the poem, e.g. the celebrated Persian fable of the Nightingale and the Rose, ¹⁰⁵ Ruby of Badakhshan etc. ¹⁰⁶

From the conceptual point of view too, the poem of Rusth'velli is related to Perso-Arabic love-poetry. If we like to consider the exposition of the idea of love as presented by Rusth'velli in statements like:

Supreme Love, species of divine essence.

a celestial acivity lifting the soul on its pinions, whoever aspires
to it, must endure many griefs.

true love is not lust, it is utterly different.

We are surprised by the astonishing similarities with numerous Sufi utterances from the love-anguished soul of the poets of *Vis Wa Ramin*.

So, apart from the clamorous war-cry, the ringing of bells and horrible shedding of blood in the battle between the Arab world and Christendom, which characterised the Middle Ages, there was a sustained effort of mutual encounter — ignored by the stalwarts of scholarship which one cannot brush away from the long history of culture. The short resume of the mediaeval Romances just recorded, marks them out as precious gifts of the Middle Ages in which the idea of encounter of two alien cultures is deeply embodied. To claim that the Middle Ages offered series of specimens of cultural harmonies is simply a flight of fancy. The note of disharmony was always there. ¹⁰⁷ But these are the refreshing exceptions: *Tristram and Iseult*, *Floris and Blanchefleur*, *The Knight in the Tiger Skin*, some among the most celebrated. They mark out essential tendency of cultures to come close together as desired by the forces of history. They still expose us to this realization that in the distant past there were some attempts at mutual understanding between the East and the West and in their interaction there was a profound

meaning of history still relevant to our time. And this encounter did not seem to be exhausted in the Middle Ages. Let us identify some traits of cultural encounter in subsequent literary activities.

Chaucer

A great mediaeval English poet Chaucer was very much acquainted with the development of Arab Science and Philosophy in Europe along with other social symptoms of his time. One has just to go through his poems from *Canterbury Tales* to *Troilus and Cresida* to find numerous references to science in general, and Arab science in particular. And the greatest evidence of his involvement in Arab science is his short incomplete prose composition *A Treatise on the Astrolabe* ¹⁰⁸ (1391 or 1392). It was based mainly on the Latin translation of Messahala's (Ma Sha'Allah, d. 815) treatise, *Compositio el Operatio Astrolabii*. ¹⁰⁹ The description of the instrument by Chaucer was nothing other than an amplification of Ma Sha' Allah's instrument. That Chaucer was vastly indebted to Arabian astronomy was suggested long ago by John Seldon. ¹¹⁰ It was ultimately established by Skeat, the celebrated editor of Chaucer's *Works*. The second part of Masha 'Allah's work (this portion is parallel to that of Chaucer) is printed in Skeat's edition of *Astrolabe*. ¹¹¹

But Chaucer was acquainted not only with the development of Arab Astronomy in the Latin World, but with the whole course of Arab Science and Philosophy in Europe. The ancient classical learning was supplemented by what the Arabs had gained from the Orient and from their own observation : and the most important channel through which this knowledge reached Western Europe came through Spain. As a result of Arab conquest Spain became the principal means of introduction of oriental learning to the West. Scholars of the Latin World turned to Spain and sought the key to knowledge in Mathematics, Astronomy, Astrology, Medicine, Philosophy. The following lines from the Prologue to the Doctor of Physic suggest his acquaintance with the Arab physicians and philosophers:

Olde Ypocras: Haly, and Galyen
Serapion. Razis and Avycen
Averrois, Damascien and Constantyn. ¹¹²

The names which Chaucer here parades are those of eminent authorities in medicine. Five of them appear in *The Romaunt of the Rose*.¹¹³ Haly is perhaps the Persian Ali Ibn al Abbas al-Majusi (d. 994). Rhazes of Baghdad (d. 925) was one of the greatest clinical doctors of Islam. Avicenna and Averroes were famous Arab philosophers as well as medical authorities of the 10th-11th and 12th centuries respectively, much celebrated in Europe in the Middle Ages. Chaucer refers to the Canon (al-Qanun) of Avicenna in "Pardoner's Tale".¹¹⁴ Constantyn (1015-87) was a renegade Muslim whose original name was unknown. He became a Benedictine Monk in Monte Cassino and brought Arabic learning to Salerno in the eleventh century. He again appears as Daun constantyn in "Merchant's Tale".¹¹⁵

But Chaucer's Works exhibited the same note of controversy as was manifested in the intellectual world of St. Thomas Aquinas and Roger Bacon some centuries earlier; the latter declared that philosophy (or rational habit of mind) was the special province of the Moslems and that they (Christians) had it all from them. Chaucer's Doctor of Physic seemed to be devoted more to science than to Christian religion as "his studie was but litel on the Bible".¹¹⁶ There is an implication of irreligion in this line. Doctors were commonly regarded as sceptical as they were zealous followers of the Arabian or Averroist school of thinking. This reference to his study other than of the Bible reminds one of the reaction of Paul Alvar to the influence of Arabic language and literature in Spain.¹¹⁷

There are numerous other references to Arab Science, Geometry, Mathematics, Astrology, Astronomy and to scientific and astronomical terms in Chaucer's star-wisdom. The Arabic name of the stars made great impression on Chaucer, and it was best illustrated in "Squire's Tale". Here "the matter of Arabi combines vigorously scientific strands with the Arabian romance of the East through its entire texture".¹¹⁸ Chaucer's modern editor John H. Fisher published Chaucer's *Equatorie of the Planets*.¹¹⁹ The Mss. of this short prose treatise were discovered in 1951; they included one astronomical table and a separate physical unit containing an essay on the construction and use of the equatorie. The equatorie is a geometric device for calculating the position of the planets in relation to one another. The style of the treatise indicates that the text was based on the Latin translation of an Arabic original,

like the treatise on the Astrolabe. The text opens with the following sentence: "In the name of God pitos and merciabile." It is very interesting to observe that through Latin translation of this Arabic line with which every Sura (Chapter) of the Quran except one, starts, Chaucer (or, more correctly, the Latin translator) could distinguish between the two words Rahaman (pitos) and Rahim (merciabile) which Sale, a distant successor of the 18th century could not comprehend in his first ever English translation of the Quran.¹²⁰ In the *Equatorie of the Planet*, Chaucer uses the words "Leus Deo Vero" meaning "Praised be the true God", again an exact translation of an Arabic "al-hamdo li-Allah" (all praises are for God). Chaucer's alchemical knowledge is fully exhibited in *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*. In 1652, Elias Ashmole included the *Canon Yeoman's Tale* in his compendium of the English alchemical treatises called *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* and said:

He that reads the later part of the *Canon Yeoman's Tele* will easily perceive him to be a Judicious Philosopher.¹²¹

But apart from Arab science Chaucer seemed to be very much familiar with Eastern literature. There is plenty of evidence of this familiarity in different narratives of his *Canterbury Tales*, and in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In Book III of the later work the term "dulkarnoun", a name for the 47th proposition of the 1st. Book of Euclid is originally the Arabic epithet of Alexander the Great ("Dhul Karnayen", the two-horned"). There is much similarity between the concept of earnest lament on the shortness of the night expressed in Book III of *Troilus and Criseyde*¹²² with the sentiment expressed in Arabic poetry. Robinson refers to Grangerat de Lagrange, *Anthologie Arabe*, No. XLVIII, where the Arabic poet prays that the "night of al-Qadr" (Arabic "laylat al qadr") might descend on the pleasure of love. The Quran says of that night that it was better than a thousand months;¹²³ the spirit of the prayer of that piece of Arabic poetry is : let the night of love-pleasure be as long as the accumulation of a thousand months. There are some echoes of Eastern fictions in "The Knight's Tale", "Pardoner's Tale", "Shipman's Tale" (the last two remind of Tales of Indian origin). But the strongest evidence of his acquaintance with eastern or more properly Arabian tales, is the "Squire's Tale", a tale of magic associated with *Arabian Nights*. "The Square's Tale" is a typical romance. Various parallels may have

been suggested regarding the different parts of the narrative. Dorothee Metlitzki has examined at some length the relation of Chaucer's different tales with the *Arabian Nights* and other eastern sources.¹²⁴ The romance of Cleomades and the story of Ebony Horse in the *Arabian Nights* seem to be known to Chaucer as suggested by his reference to the love of Algarsylf and Theodora towards the end of the "Squire's Tale".¹²⁵

Another powerful source of Chaucer's tales was Petrus Alfonsi's (born 1062) *Disciplina Clericalis*, a "mile-stone in the development of Mediaeval literature". Petrus Alfonsi not only brought Arab experimental science into England, but he inherited the whole range of the Arabo-Hebraic culture of Spain and transmitted it to England. Chaucer's reference to Piers Alfonse i.e. Petrus Alfonsi in the "Tale of Melibee"¹²⁶ points to one of the most important sources from which he derived much of his narrative materials, through French and Italian translations. In the Hebrew and Arabic fictional tradition from which Petrus Alfonsi received much of his narrative art and technique he could subordinate the tendency to moralize to a deeper human interest. This was something novel in the mediaeval western chain of stories. And Chaucer inherited this Arabo-Hebraic cultural trend at least indirectly from Petrus Alfonsi in his narrative classic, *Canturbury Tales*. Dorothee Metlitzki examines thoroughly the role of *Disciplina Clericalis* in the Mediaeval European literature including Chaucer's tales. "The ramifications of the *Disciplina Clericalis* in Middle English literature illustrate not only the extent to which Arabic subject-matter penetrated the vernacular literature of the West, but also the interdependence of European literatures in the use of materials".¹²⁷

REFERENCES

1. William Jones, Preface to the *Poem* (1772), *Works*, Vol. X. (Teignmouth 1807), pp 202-03.
2. James Cavana Murphy, *The History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain*, (London 1816), pp 316-19; Murphy referred to *Origine, progresso e stato attuale di ogni Letteratura* by G. Andres (Parma 1782-99).
3. Goethe took note of the factor and became interested in the history of the enrichment of Western culture by the Arabs in the Middle Ages, vide James Boyd, *Notes to Goethe's Poems*, (Oxford 1944-49), Vol. 2, p 174.

4. G. E. von. Grunchaum. *Themes in Mediaeval Arabic Literature* (London 1981). p 138.
5. Vide "Courtly Love", *Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*. ed. Marion Wynne Davies (London 1992). p 435.
6. *Ibid.*, 435.
7. Roger Boase. "Arab Influences on European Love Poetry". *A Handbook Of Oriental Studies*. ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden and New York 1992). p 459.
8. David Daiches. and Anthony Thorlby. eds. *Literature and Western Civilisation: The Mediaeval World* (London 1973). Articles are: i. Elizabeth Salter. "Courts and Courtly Love", pp 407-44; ii. Elizabeth Salter. "Mediaeval Lyric", pp 445-84; iii. Lynne Lawner. "Marcabrun and the Origins of 'Trober Clus' ", pp 485-523.
9. Grunchaum. "The Arab Contribution to Troubadour Poetry". *Themes in Mediaeval Arabic Literature* (London 1981). pp 138-51.
10. Quoted in Grunchaum, *Ibid.*, p 147.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Some scholars are of the opinion that the term "Troubadour" was derived from the Arabic root "tariba"; and "mutrib", an Arabic word for singer, is derived from the same root. But Nykl guards us against any "unnecessary exaggeration"; vide Nykl. *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and its Relation with the Old Provençal Troubadours* (Beltimore 1946). p 386.
13. Vide Peter Dronke's spirited opposition to Arab theory of Courtly Love in his *Mediaeval Latin and the Rise of European Love Lyrics*. 2 vols. (Oxford 1968). Vol. I. pp 50-56.
14. C. S. Lewis. *Allegory of Love*. (Oxford 1977). p 11.
15. Quoted in Nykl. *Hispano-Arabic Poetry*. *op. cit.*, p 21.
16. Boase. *op. cit.*, pp 462-64.
17. Nykl. *op. cit.*, pp 390-91.
18. *Ibid.*, pp 390-91.
19. *Ibid.*, p 393.
20. Boase. *op. cit.*, p 467.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Dronke. Vol. I. *op. cit.*, p 21.
23. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p 21.
24. Nykl. *op. cit.*, p 89.
25. *Ibid.*, p 20.
26. Grunchaum. *op. cit.*, p 149.
27. *Ibid.*, pp 148-49. We occasionally come across this sentiment in Romantic Poetry of the nineteenth century. Keats had a luxury of aching joy referred to in the beginning of "Ode to a Nightingale". And Shelley gave a notable

utterance to this feeling towards the end of his "Epipsychidion": 'Love's very pain is sweet'; vide Hutchinson, *Poetical Works of Shelley*, ed. (Hutchinson 1983), p 424.

28. Boase, "Arab Influences on European Love Poetry", note 87, *A Handbook of Oriental Studies*, *op. cit.*, p 479.
29. "Vocabulaire Latin, Persian et coran" by M. J. Klaproth, *Memoires Relatifs a l'Asie* (Paris, 1938), pp 113-256; G. Kuun, *Codex Cumanicus* (Budapest, 1880), referred to in Hasan Javadi's *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature* (Calcutta, 1983), p 10.
30. W.J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, 6 vols. (New York 1906), Vol. I, p 77.
31. Leonard Chalmers Hunt, *The Khamriya: Wine Songs of Umar Ibn al-Farid and Other Arabic Poems* (London 1923), pp. VII-VIII.
32. *Ibid.*, p X.
33. The full title of the original Spanish book is *La Escatologia Musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (Madrid 1919), the title of the abridged English translation is *Islam and the Divine Comedy* by Harold Sutherland (New York 1926).
34. F. Gabrieli, "The Transmission of Learning and Literary Influences to Western Europe", *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge 1986), Vol. 28, pp 879-80.
35. R. A. Nicholson, *A Persian Forerunner of Dante*, Privately printed, 1944, pp 3-4. There is also another claim by J. J. Modi from Zoroastrian point of view in his *Dante Papers* (Bombay, 1914), specially pp 1-71.
36. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp 76-77.
37. Grunebaum, *op. cit.*, p 149. One may recall the sentiment expressed in i. *Wis o Ramin* of Gurgani, a twelfth century Persian Romance:
 I have given him my heart in such a way that no part of it remains mine any longer.
 Quoted in Peter Dronke, Vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p 24;
- ii. Shelley's "Epipsychidion":
 We shall become the same, we shall be one spirit within two frames ;
 Oh! Wherefore two, one passion in twin hearts.
 Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, pp 423-24.
38. Grunebaum, *op. cit.*, p 151.
39. *Ibid.*, p 142.
40. *Ibid.*, p 144.
41. *Ibid.*
42. F. N. Robindon (ed.), *The Complete Works of Chaucer*; vide notes to the lines 1372-76, p 673 and to lines 1663 ff, p 675. There are numerous references in Chaucer's poetry not only to Arab science and philosophy.

- but to Arab poetry as well. Walter W. Skeat in his edition of *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* gives an account of the sources of the Canterbury Tales and refers to the matters of Araby — its science, philosophy and poetry, 5 vols. (Oxford 1894, rep. 1972), Vol. 3, pp 371-504. Dorothee Mellitzki offers a very good treatment of Chaucer's acquaintance with Arab science and philosophy in her book *The Matter of Araby in Mediaeval England* (New Haven, 1977), pp 73-92).
43. Grunbaum, *op. cit.*, p 145.
 44. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry*, *op. cit.*, p 371. Nykl thinks that the treatment of Ovid in C. S. Lewis's *Allegory of Love* (pp 5-7) is "incompetent", p 403, Note 5.
 45. Nitall Rudd, "Daedulus and Icarus (II): From the Renaissance to the Present Day", *Ovid Reviewed* ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge 1990), pp 39-43.
 46. *A Handbook of Oriental Studies*, *op. cit.*, p 473.
 47. *Ibid.*, p 473.
 48. Nykl refers to Ibn Khaldun's *Mugaddima* as the source of this information; vide Nykl, *op. cit.*, p 380. But Rosenthal in his translation of *The Mugaddima*, Vol. 3, gives a note (no. 1784) that the name of the inventor is not certain.
 49. Nykl, pp 373-400.
 50. *Ibid.*, p 382.
 51. *Ibid.*, p 382.
 52. Dronke, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p 50.
 53. Montgomery Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh 1965), p 55.
 54. *Ibid.*
 55. Mellitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Mediaeval England*, p 5; In the life time of Bede, as early as 724, John, Bishop of Seville, translated the *Bible* into Arabic, *Ibid.*, p 5.
 56. *Ibid.*, p 11.
 57. Boase, pp 462-64.
 58. Paul Alvarus, *Indiculus Luminosus*, pl. CXXI, pp 555-56; quoted in T. W. Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam*, (London 1913), pp 137f; Southern, *Western Views of Islam In the Middle Ages* (Harvard 1962), p 21; Mellitzki, *op. cit.*, p 5.
 59. R. W. Southern, *op. cit.*, p 21; Vide *Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 28, *op. cit.*, p 870. The same thing happened in India. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the distinguished linguist, refers to some cultural interaction in the Middle Ages:
We learn from one of the sixteenth century biographies of Chaitanya (the *Chaitanya Mangala* of Jayananda) that in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries,

Brahmans were taking to heterodox ways like wearing a beard instead of being clean shaven, walking with a big stick, reading Persian and reciting the Mathnavi (of Rumi, the great Persian Sufi poet) : and these the author of the biography evidently did not like, and he called them evils of the Kali or Iron age. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "Islamic Mysticism Iran and India", *Indo-Iranica* (Calcutta), Vol. 1, No. 2, 1946, pp 26-27.

60. Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 171; *vide Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2B, *op. cit.*, p 870.
62. Watt, p 172. *Vide also* Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*; A. R. Pastor, *The Idea of Robinson Crusoe*, Watford, (England, 1930), Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism*, Mehdi Nakosteen, *History of Islamic Origin of Western Education*, (Colorado 1964), particularly Chapter IX : "The Transmission of Muslim Learning and Europe's Intellectual Awakeing", pp 179-95.
63. Watt, p 119.
64. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and its Relation with the Old Provençal Troubadours* (Baltimore 1946).
- 64a. Ibn Khaldun, *The Mugaddima* Eng. tr. Franz Rosenthal, 3 Vols. New York, 1958), Vol. 3, "Spanish Muwashshah and Zajal", pp 440-65.
65. *Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2B, *op. cit.*
66. *A Handbook of Oriental Studies*, Salma Khadra Jayyusi ed., (Leiden and New York 1992).
67. S. M. Stern, *Hispano-Arabic Strophio Poetry*, Leonard Patrick Harvey ed., (London 1974).
68. Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role In Mediaeval Literary History, A Forgotten Heritage*, (Philadelphia 1987).
69. Nykl only refers to this Zajal (no. c11), but he does not supply it in his book.
70. Nykl, *op. cit.*, pp 299-300.
71. Dronke, *Mediaeval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp 28, 29, 31.
72. *Ibid.*, p 31.
73. *Ibid.*, pp 29, 31.
74. *Ibid.*, p 29, 30.
75. *Ibid.*, p 30
76. *Ibid.*, p 31.
77. *Ibid.* The word "raqib" or rival lover appears again and again in troubadour poetry; recurrence of the word in Spanish Kharjas only suggests a strong attachment of the Mozarabic poets for this Arabic word; this word meaning "rival lover" enjoyed such an undisputed vogue that the word itself seemed to have no rival.

78. Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of the Orient*, (Macmillan 1986), pp 15-17.
79. Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Mediaeval England* (New Haven and England 1977), p 248.
80. *Ibid.*, p 248.
81. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6, "History and Romance", pp 117-219, and Ch. 8, "The Matter of Araby and the Making of Romance", pp 240-250.
82. S. S. Geddes, "The Middle English Poem of *Floris and Blanchefleur* and the Arabian Nights Tale of Ni amah and Naomi. A study in Parallels". *Emporia State Research Studies* 19, 1970, pp 14-24, referred to in Michael Swanton's *English Literature Before Chaucer*, U.K., 1987, p. 317.
83. Richard F. Burton, *Arabian Nights*, Vol. 1, p 283; Vol. 2, pp 45 ff. Vol. 4, no. 1-2, Vol. 7, p 256.
84. Kabbani, *op. cit.*, p 16.
85. Swanton, *op. cit.*, pp 216-25.
86. Hazm, Ibn, *Tauq-al-Hamamah* (The Dove's Necklace). Tr. A. J. Arberry.
87. Swanton, *op. cit.*, p 219.
88. It sufficiently reminds us of the tale of *Laila and Majnun* and Nizami's beautiful romance *Khusru and Shirin*.
89. Swanton, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
90. *Ibid.*, p 225.
91. Metlitzki, *op. cit.*, p 250.
92. A. C. Baugh, ed. *Chaucer's Major Poetry* (New Jersey 1963), p 75.
93. Quoted by Maxime Rodinson in "The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam", *Legacy of Islam, op. cit.*, p 25.
94. *Ibid.*, Metlitzki, *op. cit.*, p 245.
95. Swanton, *op. cit.*, pp 214-15.
96. *Ibid.*, p 215.
97. Dronke, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p 23.
98. *Ibid.*, Note. 2, pp 25-26.
99. Franz R. Rosenthal, "Literature", *The Legacy of Islam* (Oxford 1974), p 341.
100. *The Knight in the Tiger Skin, op. cit.*, p 30.
101. *Ibid.*, p 75.
102. *Ibid.*, p 357.
103. Jami's *Salaman Wa Absal* was translated from Persian into English some centuries after, by Edward Fitzgerald. Vide A. J. Arberry, *Jami's Salaman and Absal : A Study* (Cambridge 1956).
104. Rusthveli, *The Knight in the Tiger Skin, op. cit.*, p 78.
105. *Ibid.*, pp 43, 203.
106. *Ibid.*, p 30. Perso-Arabic words via Turkish may have passed into Georgian

- (Rusthveli has used many such words in his Romance) and also into Russian Vocabulary; vide Nicholas Poppe, Jr., "A Survey of Studies of Turkic Loan-Words in the Russian Language", *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. XI, 1966, pp 287-310.
107. Metlitzki, *op. cit.*, pp 117-219.
 108. F. N. Robinson ed., *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford 1985). There is a reference to the Astrolabe in some of the tales in the *Arabian Nights*: "Tale of the Tailor", Night 29, Burton. *Arbian Nights*, 1885, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p 304.
 109. Metlitzki thinks otherwise: it "was a product of the school of Maslama al Majriti, the eleventh-century Spanish astronomer", vide *The Matter of Araby in Mediaeval England*, *op. cit.*, p 76.
 110. John Seldon, Preface to Drayton's *Polyolbion*, Drayton's *Works* (London 1976), Vol. I, XLIII, quoted in Robinson's edition of Chaucer's *Works*, *op. cit.*, p 868; vide Drayton's *Works*, Vol. IV, Tercentenary edition (Oxford 1961). Here again Chaucer's acquaintance with Arab Astronomy and Mathematics is referred to, p. XI.
 111. Robinson, *Chaucer's Works*, *op. cit.*, p 868, Skeat, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Vol. 3, "A Treatise on the Astrolabe", *op. cit.*, pp 175-232.
 112. Prologue to the Doctor of Physic, *Works*, 21, *op. cit.*, pp 431-33.
 113. 15959ff. referred to by Robinson, notes to the lines: *op. cit.*, pp 429-33. 662.
 114. "The Pardoner's Tale", 889-91, *Works*, *op. cit.*, p 154.
 115. "Merchant's Tale", 1810, *Works*, *op. cit.*, p 121. There is almost the same parade of learned names in as late a poem as Browning's *Paracelsus*; vide *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, Ian Jack and Margaret Smith eds. (Oxford 1983), 211-13, p. 287, and 945-47, p. 349. It is characteristic of Paracelsus to have attacked Razi as the latter's writings were widely used as text books. But Razi's contributions were distinguished and deserve more attention than was accorded to by the editors of Browning.
 116. Prologue to Doctor of Physic, line 438; *Works*, *op. cit.*, p 20.
 117. Vide Southern, *op. cit.*, p 21.
 118. Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Mediaeval England*, *op. cit.*; specially chapter 3, "Scientific Imagery in Chaucer", pp 73-92.
 119. John H. Fisher, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1977). This treatise is not published in Robinson's Edition of Chaucer; it is just referred to with a note of uncertainty; vide Robinson, *op. cit.*, p 544.
 120. Edward Lane in a note to the Introduction to the first volume of the *Thousand and One Nights* justifies his own translation of these two words

"rahman" and "rahim" as "compassionate" and "merciful" respectively and observes : Sale has erred in rendering conjunctly "most merciful", vide *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*. (1883). Shelley has probably followed Sale in a letter to one of his friends, where he used "merciful god". In recent times, Clouston shares Lane's views on the translation and interpretation of these two words; vide *The Bakhtyar-Namah: A Persian Romance*, translated by Sir William Ouseley and edited by W. A. Clouston (Leamington, p 123.

121. Metlitzki, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
122. *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book III, II 1427-42, *Works*, p 436.
123. *The Quran*: "Laylat al Qadr Khairum min alfi shahr" — the respected night is better than a thousand months — Surah XCVII, vide A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, *op. cit.*, p 652. Robert Southey characterises it as the "most holy night" in *Thalaba*, and gives a detailed note on this concept, vide *Works*, 10 Vols. (London, 1838), Vol. IV, p 290.
124. Metlitzki, *op. cit.*, pp 137-59.
125. Continuation of the story is found in Book IV of Spenser's *Fairie Queene*.
126. "The Tale of Melibee", Chaucer's *Works*, line 1053, *op. cit.*, p 170.
127. Metlitzki, *op. cit.*, pp 95-106.

BENGAL'S MEMORIES OF PORTUGAL

One of the first fictional works in the Bengali language that exploited the history of the Portuguese settlement in Bengal is a novel entitled *Upanibes* (Colony or Settlement) was written by Narayan Gangopadhyaya (1917-70). It was serialised in a literary magazine during the years 1942-43. The author was still an unknown figure in the Bengali literary scene but the short novel attracted immediate attention of the readers because of the freshness of the theme conspicuous by its locale and the people represented in it. This locale was never used by the run-of-the-mill fictions engrossed with either the urban middle class or with the rural agricultural workers. The locale in this novel is south Bengal, through which flow a large number of streams and rivers to the Bay of Bengal. It is a deltaic region where water is saline and the soil soft and fragile, making human settlement extremely precarious. Even the brick-made walls of houses collapse within a couple of years, not to speak of the ordinary mud huts and thatched cottages. Yet this inhospitable land has been used by people, poor and daring, at different period of history. Probably the early settlers in this area were the Portuguese who came to this place about three hundred years ago. The ruins of a fort constructed by them engaged in various maritime activities, are the silent witnesses of an exciting past of an adventurous people. Even a few years ago, the author of the novel, informs, certain parts of a huge church existed here. They do not have any traces now. An iron-made canon, however, can still be seen buried deep under the sands. These are the only remnants of the past habitation.

The Portuguese had left long ago; only eight to ten families of their descendents still live there. It is difficult to distinguish them from the local villagers. They have forgotten the language of their ancestors, they have forgotten the social customs of their forefathers and now have almost completely merged with natives of south Bengal. However, they

still claim to be Roman Catholic Christians and they have retained their Christian European names. A few traces of the foreignness of their origin can be found in certain ceremonies and customs.

There is at least one character in the novel, one Gonjales, who is direct descendent of the historical figure Sebastian Gonjales. Sebastian was a well-known sailor who escaped the massacre of the Portuguese soldiers and traders by the king of Aracan in 1607, and captured the island of Sandeep in South Bengal two years later. He established himself as an independent ruler¹ of the island. Although other characters do not have such exalted ancestry, some of them are quite conscious of their Portuguese past. Like the ruins of the fort and the buried canon, the memories of their ancestry lie deep in their consciousness.

The narrative is located in the mid-twentieth century Bengal, but the period when the Portuguese commanded the Bay of Bengal and riverine tracts of the southern region of the land also act as its backdrop. This work has been admired by the contemporary critics mainly as a realistic account of a group of people steeped in poverty and misery and yet so vigorous and lively, radically different from the English-educated sophisticated middle class Bengalis. It was also appreciated as work that atristically used the history of the contact of the Portuguese and the Bengalis and their assimilation through the centuries. The Portuguese are no more in Bengal and yet the links between the two people persists. This novel is an acknowledgment of those historical links, which were first celebrated by Camcos:

Here by the mouths where hallowed Ganges ends
Bengal's beauteous Eden wide extends.²

II

The Bengali lexicographers and grammarians inform that the Bengali vocabulary consists of between one hundred and hundred-and-ten words of Potuguese origin, most of which entered into the language between seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Many of them are names of objects and ideas introduced by the Portugese in Bengal. "They indicate", writes Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the distinguished Indian linguist, "the extent of the material culture which Bengal and India owe to the adventurous Lusitanians."³ We do not know how many Bengalis had

learnt the Portuguese language, but Portuguese was undoubtedly the virtual lingua franca in the coastal area of India. Lord Clive, the founder of the British empire in India did not know any Indian language but could speak Portuguese fluently. The East India Company wanted all their officers to learn Portuguese within six months of their arrival in Bengal. It can be safely conjectured that a considerable number of Bengalis particularly those living near the coast and river-ports had acquired some smattering of the language to ensure smooth communication. The earliest Portuguese word to be used in Bengali literature is interestingly, *harmad*, meaning 'pirate', derived from the Portuguese *armada*. It is found in a text written in the sixteenth century when Portuguese ships were regular visitors in Bengal rivers. Not all words of Portuguese origin the Bengali accepted, are associated with the Portuguese naval activities, including piracy, but indicative of a strong impact of the Portuguese material culture on Bengali life. Few such words can be catalogued here:⁴

Almari (from *almario*), *kanestara* (from *canastra*), *cabi* (from *chave*), *garad* (from *grade*), *tamak* (from *tab'ca*), *balti* (from *balde*), *anaras* (from *ananas*), *kamra* (from *camara*), *saban* (from *sabao*), *perek* (from *prego*), *mej* (from *me'sa*), *janala* (from *janella*) *binti* (from *vinte*, a game of cards), *girja* (from *igreja*), *alpin* (from *pin*), *phita* (from *fitá*) and *pau* (from *pau*).

The number of Portuguese words in Bengali was certainly much larger in the seventeenth and eighteenth century than it is now, and some words which have disappeared from the standard Bengali may still linger on in the non-standard dialects of south Bengal. The linguistic influence came through everyday contact between the Portuguese and the native Bengali population: the words underwent considerable phonological and morphological changes. Yet, as Chatterji observes: "the general closeness of the Bengali loan words to the original Portuguese forms, however, is striking."⁵

The intensity of the Portuguese influence in Bengali vocabulary can be realized from the fact that some words, such as *veranda* and *janala* have completely replaced the indigenous words meaning the "corridor" of the "window" respectively. On the other hand, the chair and the table which were borrowed from the English, replaced *kedara* and *mej* (the borrowings from the Portuguese *cadeira* and *mesa* respectively)

indicating the struggle between two foreign cultures both trying to dominate the indigenous culture. The Portuguese loan words, yet to be studied systemically, are sources of information about the social encounter between the Bengalis and the Portuguese, and not just philological curiosities. The Bengali-Portuguese encounter went beyond linguistic contact and had a larger cultural dimension. Surendranath Sen, a distinguished historian, writing about the cultural trade between the two communities observes that unlike other European communities that came to India, Portuguese “did not suffer from the colour prejudice so common in West, and freely intermarried with the native of the country. Some of them permanently settled in this land, and if they failed to make any marked contribution to our civilization and culture, they tried best to improve the agricultural resources of the country of their adoption”.⁶

Sen points out that “it is seldom realized that many of our common flowers and fruits were totally unknown before the Portuguese came” to India. With a touch of humor he adds, “the noxious weed that brings solace to many and now forms a staple product of Rangpur was brought by the Portuguese as was that common article of food, potato, which is relished by princes and peasants alike”. In the list of items, Sen includes, along with potato and tobacco which the Portuguese brought to India from north America, cashew nut which came from Brazil and several fruits and flowers, particularly, ‘*Krishna Chūdā*’ (*Mirabilis Jalapa*), one of the most admired flowers celebrated in Bengali life and literature.⁷

III

Before I talk about the Bengali-Portuguese literary relationship I like to mention a few important figures in the Bengali literary life who had some Portuguese connections. In the late eighteenth century when all the traces of Portuguese presence in Bengal had virtually disappeared, a fascinating character known as Anthony Firinghi made some mark in the contemporary literary activities in Calcutta. His real name was Anthony Heusman, a person of Portuguese origin. It was the time when many poet-singers in Calcutta used to run professional troupes which used to perform on certain festive occasions at public places or in the courtyards of landlords and rich citizen. These performances included

songs of religious fervour but more often than not songs of erotic themes. Different troupes used to compete with one another and the meeting of traditional rivals were always the major source of entertainment. Quite often poets composed impromptu verses on themes suggested to them. Questions and answers formed a regular feature of the performance; they provided dramatic moments as well as opportunities to settle personal scores among the rival poets. Among these poets Anthony shined brightly for his ready wit and verbal skill as well as for his religious catholicity.

Belonging to the Luso-Indian community, Anthony learnt Bengali, formed his own group of verse-makers and established himself as an outstanding performer. His allegiance to Christianity did not prevent him to become a devotee of Kali, Bengal's most popular goddess, and to build a temple in her honour. This temple still exists in Calcutta, people fondly referring it as the Feringhi Kali temple. In one of his songs, Anthony, or Antuni, as he is known to the Bengalis, describes himself as a "Feringhi".⁸ Very little is known about his life and activities, except that he lived and dressed like the Bengalis. In one of his songs he makes an autobiographical reference: "Happily I live in Bengal and I wear Bengali clothes". Now partly romanticized he has passed into legends, his life being celebrated in a popular play and also in a popular film, the leading matinee idol of Bengal playing the role of this Portuguese-Bengali singer.

The more significant figure of Indo-Portuguese origin is Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31), one of the pioneers of the intellectual movement in the nineteenth century Bengal, popularly known as the Bengal Renaissance.⁹ A remarkable teacher who created a furore in the orthodox Hindu society by his radical view on various social and moral questions, Derozio enthused the young minds not to accept the injunctions of authority without examination, and to challenge all conventions in the light of reason. He was also a poet of merit, the first Indian to write in English. He died at the age of twenty-two, but his life like a blazing meteor, left a permanent mark on the history of modernization of India. Like Anthony Firinghi, he too, belonged to the Luso Indian community but his literary activities and social thoughts did not have any particular links with Portugal. It is worth mentioning, however, that he wrote two songs: "A Song Tuned to Portuguese Air"

and "A Portuguese Song" both tender expressions of his nostalgic association with the country of his forefathers. It is interesting indeed that Derozio, a person of Portuguese ancestry, was the first poet to write a patriotic poem on India, entitled, "To India-My Native Land".

IV

The history of Bengali literature has brief, but exciting phase in which the Portuguese presence has more than a symbolic dimension. This phase was intimately connected with the history of evangelization in Bengal which officially began in 1579 when the Mughal Emperor Akbar granted a *firman* allowing the Portuguese missionaries to preach Christianity in Bengal. The oldest church existing in Bengal was built twenty years later, in Bandel, then a small village in the district of Hooghly.

We do not know the nature of the Bengali reaction to the new faith, the extent of hostility towards the missionaries, or the curiosity and eagerness about the new religion. From the official records it is evident that by the end of the seventeenth century several Portuguese missionaries had learnt Bengali, composed grammars and primers, translated parts of the Bible and prepared tracts on Christian doctrines. It appears that a substantial body of Portuguese-Bengali literature grew by the beginning of the eighteenth century, though very little traces of it remains today.

Most of these works were produced by a mission located at Bhawal, a place near Dacca, now the capital of Bangladesh, Manoel da Assumpcao, a native of Evora, and an Augustinian friar of the Congregate India, Oriental, who was the rector of this mission is gratefully remembered by all students of Bengali prose for his pioneering contribution to the making of modern Bengali prose. He was born in the early decades of the eighteenth century, and had worked in different churches in Bengal — Bandel and Chinsura are among them—till 1762. He wrote a book entitled *Crepar Xastrer Orth Bhed or Cathecismo da Doutrina* (The Interpretation of the Scripture of Mercy) in 1734. It was published in 1743 from Lisbon. This work is considered important in the history of the Bengali language at least for two reasons: (1) this is the first extant printed work of Bengali prose, and (2) this is also the first work written in Bengali to be printed in Roman characters. It may be

mentioned here that Bengali had hardly any prose writing before the nineteenth century except in the form of legal documents and official letters and petitions. The missionaries were the first to see the potentiality of the prose and its immediate usefulness and instrument of religious propagation.

Manoel's book is a bilingual work, written both in Bengali and Portuguese, the former appearing on the verses and the latter on the rectos of the page. The whole text is in the Roman character. We need not go into the details of the content of the work; it is sufficient to say that it is an exposition of the Christian doctrines in the form of dialogues between a teacher (*Guru*) and a disciple (*Sishya*). Several tales are interspersed throughout the book to illustrate moral principles of Christianity. There are two songs in the second part of the book entitled *Cantiga Sobre os mysterios de fe* (song on the mysteries of faith) and *Cantiga Ao Memino Jesus* (song on Infant Jesus newly born). These are the first ever words of praise of Jesus Christ in the Bengali language.¹⁰

Manoel's second book *Vocabulario em Idioma Bengalla und Portuguez*, the first grammar and dictionary of the Bengali language was also published from Lisbon in 1743. This work, too, is written in Roman character and the spellings of Bengali words indicate their phonological adjustment according to Portuguese pronunciation. The intention of the preparation of the grammar and the vocabulary was not to help the natives in their pedagogical programmes but to facilitate the missionary activities and more particularly to train the missionaries to speak Bengali. The importance of the work lies in its historical role to initiate a systematic analysis of the Bengali language. The work has been reprinted by the University of Calcutta with a learned introduction from Suniti Kumar Chatterjee who had demonstrated its importance as a source of information about the state of the Bengali language in the eighteenth century and in the historical reconstruction of Bengali phonology and morphology.¹¹

The most fascinating figure in the history of Bengali prose is one Dom Antonio de Rozario (1643-95?), a Bengali who came to closest contact of the Portuguese missionaries. He was a prince of a small estate, Bhushna, a place near Dacca. At a very young age he was taken prisoner by the *Mags* i.e. the Burmese. He was rescued by a captain of a Portuguese ship who handed him over to a benevolent priest Manoel da Rozario. The story goes that the young boy refused food for several

days and to communicate with any one but finally embraced Christianity after he had a vision of St. Anthony in a dream. His Hindu name is not known : he came to be known as Dom Antonio de Rozario.¹²

This Bengali Christian who grew into a powerful leader propagating Christianity, wrote a book entitled *Brahman-Roman-Catholic Samvad* which was printed from Lisbon in 1743 by Francisco de Silva.¹³ The existence of this work was first made known to the scholarly world by Father Hosten, a Jesuit Father teaching at the St. Xavier's College, Calcutta in 1914.¹⁴ It was finally made available to the Bengali readers by the historian Surendranath Sen in 1937. This book is also written in the form of dialogues between a Roman Catholic Christian and a Brahmin, a member of the highest caste among the Hindus. The book proves the falsity of Hinduism and the superiority of Christianity which according to its author ensures salvation and true knowledge of God. This is certainly the first coherent narrative in the Bengali language initiating a religious polemic that grew into volume in the nineteenth century and which engaged the attention of many Bengali intellectuals of that period.

Most probably, Manoel da Assumpcao took the manuscript to Portugal and translated it himself into Portuguese. The mss. was presented to the Arch-Bishop of Evora where it is still preserved.¹⁵ The book, full of interesting stories and theological arguments was composed in all probability in the mid-seventeenth century. Before it was finally printed many years after the death of its author, the text had undergone several changes as the mss. was in circulation among the missionaries for a long time. The Portuguese missionaries must have found it useful for evangelical works and combating the Hindu criticism of Christianity. Otherwise the book would not have been translated into Portuguese at all by Manoel himself and would not have been printed at Lisbon. Recent researches about the life and activities of Dom Antonio show that he was an extremely interesting figure in the history of misunderstanding and of unfulfilled promises.¹⁶

V

Whatever be the extent of linguistic and religious interactions between the Bengalis and the Portuguese, the literary relation was altogether non-existent. We do not have any evidence of any kind of literary contacts

between the two communities. Even in the nineteenth century when Bengali literary activities were strongly influenced by European literature very few in Bengal took serious interest in the Iberian Literature. The renaissance epic *Os Lusíadas* by Camoes was probably known to a few through its English translation by R. Fanshawe¹⁷ Which appeared as early as in 1655, but it did not, despite its celebration of the discovery of the sea-route to India by Vasco da gama, evoke any interest in the Indian educated community. The Indians were too engrossed with English literature to notice a poem which glorified the nautical and military prowess of the Portuguese and also the crusading spirit to Christianize the East and indeed the vision of European expansion in Asia. The poem celebrated the Portuguese conquest of India and the supremacy of the Western world over the Orient: it was read by the Western powers, as argued by Professor Ranjan, as 'an epic of those who hold possession of India'.¹⁸

History and legend have worked together to the construction of a grandiose and imposing image of a man, Vasco da Gama, the most well known Portuguese in India. Camoes' epic contributed enormously to the growth of a perception of the West as a daring and ruthless power and it continued to linger in Indian memory and imagination. This perception surfaced again in Bengali narratives both historical and fictional. One of the finest works that emerged out of the Bengali awe to Vasco da Gama as well as the Portuguese sailors and traders in general, is a slender volume entitled *Firingi Banik* (1922) written by a noted historian, Akshay Kumar Maitreya (1861-1930)¹⁹ Written at a time when the nationalist movement was taking a new direction, and published during the most intensive period of freedom struggle led by Gandhi, the work through its vivid account of the Portuguese in India, contributed to the increasing patriotic fervour of the Bengalis. Affiliated with the larger discourse of imperialism, it was also a critique of the West's treatment of the East. Narrating as it did the Portuguese conquest of India, main objective of which to control the monopoly of Indo-European trade, the work also analysed the impact of Portuguese presence in India which resulted in the growth of extreme bitterness between the Muslims and the Christians, as well as in the ruination of several indigenous industries, particularly the naval constructions at Indian harbours. The narrative also foregrounds the degenerating of the earlier Portuguese policy of

spreading the Words into an intensified terrorism often bordering to barbarity.

This work, whatever be its value today as a piece of scholarship, inspired one of the famous short stories in Bengali: *Rakta Sandhya* (Blood-red Evening) written by Sharadindu Bandopadhyaya.³⁰ Before I talk about this story in some detail I like to say a few words about Narayan Gangopadhyaya's *Padasanchar* (Expansions),³¹ probably the most well known Bengali novel that exploits the Portuguese adventures in Bengal in the sixteenth century as its theme. Designed as a historical novel, the narrative is located in the early sixteenth century Bengal, about two years after the establishment of Portuguese power in western India. It has a large canvas with a wide representation of people belonging to various socio-cultural groups and religious segments vying with each other to wield power and authority. Although not completely free from the tendencies to romanticize the past the novel is close to historical records and it reconstructs an exciting past with considerable competence. The major incidents narrated here are verifiable historical facts and the imaginary parts are not very far from the realm of probability.

The figure of Vasco da Gama, who is not directly involved in the action casts its shadow over the narrative. Neither the locale nor the time of the story have any narratorial connection with Vasco da Gama but his arrival in India forms the prologue of the novel lending to it a greater magnitude and historical significance. Some of the major events mentioned in the narrative are historical. In fact the story begins with an event related to Martin Affonso de Mello Jusanta, one of the important figures in the history of Portuguese adventures in Bengal. It was in 1528, he along with his few comrades, found himself shipwrecked in the Bay of Bengal. Some fishermen guided them, it is difficult to decide whether by design or by mistake, to Chakoria, a place near Chittagong, the famous port of that time. Martin Affonso and his companions were thrown into prison by the local ruler Khuda Bukush. However, later he promised them liberty in lieu of their military services in a feud he had with a local ruler. According to records, the Portuguese prisoners helped him generously but Khuda Bhaksh failed to keep his promise. Meanwhile two lieutenants of De Mello arrived at Chakaria to negotiate with Khuda Bhaksh but their efforts to pay him ransom did not succeed. Martin Affonso made a desperate attempt to escape from the prison but

it too failed and resulted in greater distress. His nephew, a charming youth, was brutally sacrificed by the local Brahmins.

Finally it is through the good offices of one Khaja Shihab-ud-din, a Persian merchant of some political clout, who paid a huge ransom to rescue him, Martin Affonso was sent back to Goa in 1530 after two years of misery and misfortune.²²

This novel emerging out of his historical episode is a narrative of treachery and torture, of intrigues and conspiracy, of diplomacy and conceit. The most moving episode in the novel is the brief account of the young Gonzales, the nephew of Martin Affonso. He escaped from the prison only to be caught by a fanatic Hindu who sacrificed him to a goddess in a temple. This gory incident has been narrated with power and economy against the background of a loving and tender nature, and a brief but poignant relationship between him and a young Bengali girl. The meeting between the two young people belonging to different cultures and religions, speaking different languages forms the vital core of an otherwise lurid narrative of violence. Not only is entailed in it a severe critique of Hindu fanaticism, but also a sub-text of an unfulfilled relationship between two civilizations, the Western and the Eastern. The narrator uses feelingly, perhaps a bit courageously, the Portuguese language in his portrayal of the brief relationship between Gonzales and Suparna, the Bengali girl, underlining the power and the limitation of language and the overriding presence of 'language' of love and kindness. In their first meeting Gonzales greets Suparna in Portuguese, *Olo, Boz dias*, the girl finds the words strange though not totally incomprehensible, but cannot respond. In their second meeting they came closer. Silence became as meaningful as any language could.

The Words Suparna spoke were strange to Gonzales but he understood her eyes; there was trust and curiosity and friendship. He smiled. His smile was bright like the daylight; spar it spread all over his sparkling teeth. His eyes were calm and dark, his hair soft and golden. With his long artistic fingers he tapped at his own breast and said, *Tenho minha pequena ... pequena, minha pequena*: he said again. Suparna wanted to say something. But how could she? She has not understood a single word. But there is a way, there is a language still. A language of sign, a language of hospitality, a language of friendship. She brought her palms close to her mouth and asked, "Will you eat something?"

Gonzales understood what she had said. He looked at her tenderly for a while. He was not hungry. But he did not want to decline such a warm invitation. He nodded his head : yes, he would eat.

A conspicuous feature of this novel is the frequent reference to the natural beauty and physical features of Portugal, its rivers and forests, flowers and trees which appear as parts of Gonzales' nostalgic rumination. As a contrast to the bright blue sky and luscious green fields of Bengal. Gonzales is attracted to both the countries and finds both lovely and desirable but not without an apprehension of the new and strange country. He thinks;

How intensely blue is this sky above. The sky at home is also blue and beautiful but not as soothing. He thought of his visit in the woods at Alemtejos, those beautiful olives and the shrubs and the wild roses he loved so much. But what a difference with this country. He remembered those white marbles in his country and then he looked at the soil below. How soft and what an abundance of grass. And this girl! *Minha pequena*. His heart swelled with delight.

But it is not this romantic and sentimental strain that dominates the narrative, it is tempered by a more tough and challenging predicaments of life, foregrounding larger issues, the negotiation between the self and the other in particular. Despite his friendly response and attraction towards the beauty of Bengal, Gonzales apprehends some danger lurking behind it. The moment he spots a black man in red clothes with marks of dried blood on his forehead and witch-like hair flowing on his shoulder, a chilling fear shivers through his spine. The world around him suddenly becomes hostile and sinister. This tension between the familiar and the exotic, the known and the unknown, the self and the other constitute the backbone of the narrative.

Another feature of this narrative, a linguistic one, is equally conspicuous and significant. All the twenty-three chapters of this novel, including the preface, has one epigraph each, all of which are from Camoes' *Lusiadas* in the original Portuguese. Epigraphs became a common feature of the nineteenth century Bengali fiction : they were generally from Sanskrit and English, and only occasionally from Bengali works. This is the first instance, and till date the only one, of employment

of quotations from an European poet other than English. So appropriate and suggestive all these epigraphs are that they have gone beyond their immediate decorative function. They are indicative of the mood of the ensuing action and the thematic strategies. None of the quotations have been translated but they have been integrated artistically with the narrative underlining as it were the existence of two different worlds, the foreign and the familiar, the Portuguese and the Bengali. These quotations along with a few Portuguese words of exclamations and interjections, create an uneven texture in the narrative emphasizing the contrast between two cultures.

It will be extravagant to suggest, however, that the novel emerges out of the interweaving of history and the epic *Lusiadas*. This novel is not controlled by an epic imagination nor by the insights of the dynamics of history. The encounter between the two peoples remains, more or less, confined to suspicion and hatred, cruelties and treachery. Hardly does it address deeper psychological problems involved in a cultural interaction of this dimension. The ambitious use of the Portuguese epic in the construction of a Bengali novel, however, itself is an attempt towards the understanding of the Bengali-Portuguese encounter. The Gonzales-Suparna episode, a metaphor of human love transcending race and language is the only redeeming features in this narrative of cruelty.

Violence and cruelty, however, are the most conspicuous components in the representations of the Portuguese in Bengali literature and the story *Rakta Sandhya* is the most illuminating example. The use of the word *rakta* in the title meaning both 'red' and 'blood' underline the terror and violence as well as the grand spectacle of the turning point in Indian history. The theme of this story is of the confrontation between a Muslim trader from north Africa settled in Calicut, and Vasco da Gama beginning from the time of his first visit to Zamorin and culminating into a violent finale on the Arabian Sea. The incidents narrated in the story are all fictional but within the realm of probability.

The main part of the story, a narrative of the past, is prefixed by a journalistic account of the narrator reporting a murder of an Eurasian from Goa by Golam Kader, and otherwise docile and gentle Muslim butcher, in the city of Calcutta. Investigations show that the man from Goa was a newcomer in Calcutta; he was identified as De Roja, although

it was reported that Golam Kader had addressed him as Vasco da Gama, before he stabbed him with a knife. The judges thought the butcher Golam Kader had killed the stranger by mistake because of temporary insanity. Golam Kader, however, did not express any repentance at all. On the contrary, he told the judges that would he meet the Eurasian again he would treat him in the same manner. Golam Kader accepted the death sentence calmly. Having heard this account of Golam Kader, the narrator became curious and met the butcher at his cell in the prison. Golam Kader told him a fantastic story — a story of his previous birth five centuries ago — justifying the killing of the man from Goa.

Once Golam Kader starts narrating his past life, the locale of the narrative shifts from the twentieth-century Calcutta to Calicut, the glorious and prosperous port of South India, where traders from different parts of the world frequent throughout the year. Golam Kader was then Mirza Daud, a wealthy and respectable noble of Morocco living happily in the flourishing capital of Zamorin. As the locale changes so does the style of narration : there is a radical shift in the diction, a change from pedestrian journalistic prose to a luxuriant rhetoric corresponding to the change from the British made colonial city to a medieval world of splendor.

Here in this city joy and affluence, that is Calicut, comes Vasco da Gama. He arrives not simply as a visiting trader but with designs of capturing the area, which Mirza Daud, a shrewd judge of character, suspects from the very beginning. His initial suspicions gradually deepens and culminate in open hostility. In its deep structure the story is more than an account of relationship between two powerful individuals, but of century-old bitterness between two religious communities, the Christians and the Muslims. The underlying presence of yet another narrative of a larger historical dimension connects the story with *Lusiadas*. The narrative develops splendidly bringing back the colour and the odour of the forgotten times — a fine example of reconstruction of the past with its racial attitudes, religious tensions, the spirit of adventure, and ruthless physical power. The two characters, Vasco da Gama and Mirza Daud, both physically strong and robust, intelligent and daring finally come into the open and clash swords. In a duel described with great power, the two adversaries, both skilled and elegant,

Mizra Daud wins and forces Vasco da Gama to leave the shores of India. Vasco da Gama accepts the humiliation under the threat of life but the readers have hardly any doubt that the end is yet to come and that they would meet again.

One is tempted to conjecture that the Bengali author is probably rewriting the incident of Mon Sayed of Morocco as portrayed by Cameos, who not only helped Vasco da Gama to escape from Calicut but also became a Christian. Here the story is reversed : Mirza Daud, a Muslim forces Vasco da Gama to leave India.

To come back to the main theme: a few years later, as Golam Kader tells his story, while returning from Mecca with his old and sick father, wife and young daughter, Mirza Daud is attacked by a ship of Vasco da Gama on the Arabian sea. Mirza pleads his old enemy to spare their lives in vain. They perish in the sea. Here, too, the sheer physical and military supremacy of Vasco da Gama and the presence of the wild nature add a symbolic dimension to this final encounter. It goes beyond personal hostilities but encapsulates the history of a violent confrontation between two peoples. It ceases to be a story of mere personal revenge but is transformed into a vision of impending threat that India faced from the Portuguese. By skilfully exploiting the Hindu concept of previous birth (though Golam Kader is a Muslim) the killing of the Innocent Goan by the Calcutta butcher, the story also goes beyond individual memory. The fire of revenge continues to shimmer through centuries, and is preserved through several births. Mirza Daud now born as poor butcher in Calcutta, a town separated from Calicut by thousands of miles and by five centuries, still carries the memory which surfaces suddenly with an unexpected fury. The final scene of the story, the violence of Vasco da Gama on high sea, apart from the grand spectacle is a recognition of the supremacy of the Western power and its domination over the sea.

The canons roared from all the ships of Vasco da Gama. Mirza Daud's vessel shivered like an old man swept by the winter wind. Its sails caught fire and it began to sink. The canons roared once more. The front part of his ship was dashed into pieces, allowing waters rush inside it. Everything came to an end. There was a chorus of loud lamentations. The burning ship suddenly stood erected vertically, like a human body, before it

finally went down into the sea. It all happened with amazing rapidity.

The wailing of the passengers were heard no more. The space where the ship had stood, is now occupied by playful waves. The European boats remained still. In the approaching darkness they looked like spectred ships of some other world. A little later, however, the sounds of drums and of flutes were heard from the vessels of Vasco da Gama tearing the quiet evening apart.

The sun sets here on the shores of this sea : it rises in another sky.

REFERENCES

1. See Sudhindranath Bhattacharya, "State of Bengal under Jehangir", *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, ed. By Jadunath Sarkar (Dacca 1945), p. 244.
2. *Luisadas*, Canto VII, stanza XX.
3. Sunit Kumar Chatterji, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Vol. I. (Calcutta 1926), p. 214.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 620-32.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 621. Also see, J.J.A. Campos, *History of Portuguese in Bengal* (1919), reprinted by Janaki Prakashan, (Patna, 1979), pp. 214-20. All words listed by Campos, however, are not of Portuguese origin. Some of them have entered into Bengali from Arabic. Certain words such as *tiv*, *tumba* or *berds* claiming to have been originated from the Portuguese *tio* (uncle), *tumba* (coffin) or *verde* (green) respectively were probably never used in the Bengali language.
6. Surendra Nath Sen, "The Portuguese in Bengal", *History of Bengal*, Vol. II., *op.cit.*, p. 368.
7. See Campos, *op.cit.* "Some Plants Introduced by the Portuguese in Bengal", *Addenda*, pp. 253-58.
8. Although this word is derived from the French 'Franc' and originally meant any European, it came to mean the Portuguese as evidenced from its use in *Ain-i-Ikbari*, the sixteenth century text written in Persian, and also in *Annada Mangal*, an eighteenth century Bengali narrative poem. Later it meant the Euro-Indians, and the Anglo-Indians in particular. See Janendra Mohan Das, *Bangala Bhashar Abhidhan* (Dictionary of the bengali Language) (Calcutta 1914).
9. For biographical detail see E.W.Madge, *Henry Derozio, the Eurasian, Poet and Reformer* (1904), ed. Subir Ray Chaudhury (Calcutta 1966).

10. This book was reprinted by Father Guerin from Chandan Nagar, Bengal in 1836 with a Latin preface in which he argues that only the Portuguese section of the work is written by Manuel, and the Bengali section by a native Bengali. Not only is there no evidence to support the conjecture, but the sentence-structures and the style in the Bengali section suggest to the contrary. It is, however, quite likely that Manoel had received the help of a native Bengali. For more details see S.K.De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (1919) (Calcutta 1962), pp. 60-68; also Sabita Chattopadhyay, *Bangla Sahitye Europiya Lekhak* (European Writers in Bengali) (Calcutta 1972), pp. 45-81 and Sajani Kanta Das, *Bangla Gadya Sahityer Itihas* (Calcutta 1975), pp. 20-22.
11. Manoel da Assumpcao, *Bangala Vyakaran*, ed. By Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Priyaranjan Sen (Calcutta 1931).
12. See S.K. De, *op.cit.* Also Sabita Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* The manuscripts is still preserved at the Biblioteca Publicae, Evora. See *Catalogo Dos Manuscriptos da Bibliotheca Publica Eboresense*, Tomo I (Lisbon 1850), 'Linguas Indiana', p. 345.
13. Surendra Nath Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 369, also Campos, *op.cit.*, p. 247.
14. "Three First type-printed Bengali Books", *Bengal Past and Present*, (Calcutta 1914), pp. 40-63.
15. Surendra Nath Sen informs (*History of Bengal*, *op.cit.*, p. 369), "About 1599 Father Sosa translated into Bengali a 'tract of Christian religion in which was added a short catechism by way of Dialogue, which the children frequenting the schools learnt by heart.' Sosa's tract has been unfortunately lost, but another dialogue written by a Bengali convert (*i.e.* Dom Antonio) has been preserved for us. Dom Antonio's work might have shared the same fate as that of Sosa but for the devoted care of Manoel da Assumpcao and George da Appresentaca."
16. On the basis of the *Letters* of the Jesuits, preserved at the British Library in ten bound volumes gifted by William Marsden, Professor Tarapada Mukherjee has presented extremely valuable information about the exciting life of Dom Antonio in his slender book, *Itihas Upekhita* (One Neglected in History) (Calcutta 1984) Dom Antonio acquired great command over the Portuguese language and studied Christian theology before he finally returned to his own native place at the age of twenty-three. An extremely powerful orator that he was, Dom Antonio persuaded thousands of villagers to accept Christianity. But later he incurred the wrath of the Muslim governor of Bengal for converting a Muslim, for which he was thrown into the prison for some time, and also became a target of attack both by the Augustinians and the Jesuits for subverting the process of Christianization by accommodating native Hindu rituals and practices within

the cultural life of the Bengali Christians. He died a poor and miserable man abandoned by the Christian missionaries as well as the local Hindus. Mukherji conjectures that a Bengali-Portuguese Dictionary, the manuscript of which was also collected by Marsden and now preserved at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, was prepared by Dom Antonio himself. Manoel's Vocabulary owes heavy debt to it.

17. Apart from Sir Richard Fanshawe's translation of *Os Lusíadas*, two more English translations, one by Burton in 1880 and another by Auberton, 2nd edition in 1884 — appeared in the nineteenth century.
18. See Balachandra Ranjan, *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (Duke 1999), Chapter one.
19. First serialized in the Bengali journal *Sahitya* in 1904-05.
20. This story was written in the mid-1930s and later included in *Chuya Chandan* (1935), a collection of short stories. Also to be found in *Saradindu Omnibus*, Vol. VI. ed. by Pratul Chandra Gupta (Calcutta, 1976).
21. First serialized in the Bengali journal, *Bharatvarsha* between 1952 and 54. Included in the Complete Works of Narayan Gangopadhyaya, Vol. V. The only other significant novel on this theme is *Mayukh* (1916, 2nd ed. 1919) by Rakhal Das Banerji, a famous historian as well as a competent writer of historical novels.
22. For details see Sen, *op.cit.* p. 355. Khaja Shihabuddin, not particularly a generous man, had good reasons for helping the Portuguese. He owned a galliot which was frequently used for piracy. As it looked like the Portuguese vessels the blame for the piracy used to be put on unoffending and innocent Portuguese. Ruy Vaz Pereira, a Portuguese official, captured the boat in 1526 in the interest of all honest traders and of course of his countrymen, Shihabuddin restored his relation with the Portuguese by helping Martin Affonso. Also see Campos, *op.cit.* p. 30f.

“THE SURVIVAL OF THE LEAST FIT” : DARWIN, DETECTIVE FICTION, AND THE *FIN DE SIECLE* ¹

Sherlock Holmes crops up in the unlikelyst of places. In the philosopher Daniel C. Dennett's tome, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (1995), Holmes is invoked on no less than three occasions when Dennett speaks of ingenious flights of scientific deduction. ²

But there is more that links Holmes, and, indeed, British detective crime fiction of the late 19th century, than Dennett's opus. I have deliberately introduced Dennett here in order to draw attention to what he calls the “universal acid” of Darwinian thought, something that can provide rational explanation/s for a bewildering range of natural and social phenomena. As Dennett puts it, “In a single stroke, the idea of evolution by natural selection unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose, with the realm of space and time, cause and effect, mechanism and physical law.” ³

In his influential book on Darwin and Victorian fiction, *Darwin and the Novelists : Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (1991) George Levine writes of how “recent study of Darwin makes clear”⁴ that “his entire scientific accomplishment must be attributed not to the collection of facts, but to the development of theory”.⁵ According to Levine, it is only in the latter half of the 20th century that scientists and philosophers of science have recognised Darwin's contribution to the methodology of the biological science/s.

But, to put it bluntly, Levine has got it wrong. The revolution that Darwin had brought about in scientific *method* had been clearly recognised by his contemporaries. One of the now forgotten but then extremely influential popularisers and champions of Darwin from the late 19th century was George John Romanes (1848-94). Romanes brings what would become perhaps his most famous book (a best-selling work on both sides of the Atlantic), *Darwin and After Darwin: An Exposition of the Darwinian Theory and a Discussion of Post-Darwinian Questions*, first published in 1893, with a discussion of Darwin's method.

Among the many and unprecedented changes that have been wrought by Mr. Darwin's work on *The Origin of Species*, there is one which although second in importance to no other, has not received the attention which it deserves. I allude to the profound modification which that work has produced on the ideas of naturalists with regard to method.

...the great difference between him and most of his predecessors consists in this, — that while to them the discovery or accumulation of facts was an end, to him it is the means. In their eyes it was enough that the facts should be discovered and recorded. In his eyes the value of facts is due to their power of guiding the mind to a further discovery of principles. And the extraordinary success which attended his work in this respect of *generalization* immediately brought natural history into line with the other inductive sciences, behind which, in this most important of respects, she has so seriously fallen.

After this Romanes goes on to add, "No one in this generation is able to imitate Darwin, either as an observer or a generalizer. But this does not hinder that we should all endeavour to follow his *method*..." (Italics his.)

The task of the "natural philosopher", prior to the Darwinian revolution, had been that of the tabulator or the taxonomist. His primary task had been to make a list of the marvels created by Divine fiat. He was, to use a phrase common at that time, reading from the "book of God's works" (which was complementary to, but not to be confused with, the book of "God's word" — the Bible).

What Levine calls Darwin's "development of theory", Dennett characterises as unifying "life, meaning, and purpose", and Romanes identifies as Darwin's "method", is what constitutes the first link between Darwinian evolutionary theory and detective fiction.

My *first contention* in this paper is that, without the theories of Charles Robert Darwin, Arthur Conan Doyle could not have created a Sherlock Holmes.

Sherlock Holmes is a Darwinian. "...the great difference between him and most of his predecessors consists in this, — that while to them the discovery or accumulation of facts was an end, to him it is the means. In the eyes it was enough that the facts should be discovered and

recorded. In his eyes the value of facts is due to their power of guiding the mind to a further discovery of principles." Fans of the great detective will immediately recognise that this description can be as easily be applied to the most famous lodger of 221B, Baker Street as to the author of *The Origin of Species*.

Holmes's bungling allies from Scotland Yard (Lestrade, Gregson, Athelney Jones) may be content with the mere "discovery or accumulation of facts" (or with framing hypotheses without adequate facts to guide them — which is the other side of the same kind of overzealous blindness⁷). Holmes, being, as it were, the Darwin of detection, values facts because of "their power of guiding the mind to a further discovery of *principles*". (My Italics.) Just as Darwin successfully organised thousands of small, and apparently insignificant, facts into the grand narrative of natural selection, so too does Holmes arrange apparently trivial details into the, often shocking, narrative of crime. It is almost as if Darwin had said to Conan Doyle, "You know my methods. Apply them, and it will be instructive to compare results" ⁸ — the result being Sherlock Holmes!

It is interesting to note that from the very first novel (*A Study in Scarlet*, 1887) to the last collection of stories (*The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, 1927), Darwin keeps on making, so to speak, cameo appearances in the adventures of the world's best-known detective.

In *A Study in Scarlet*, Darwin is mentioned twice.

The first time is when Holmes returns from a musical concert. "It was magnificent," he said as he took his seat. "Do you remember what Darwin says about music? He claims that the power of producing and appreciating it existed among the human race long before the power of speech was arrived at. Perhaps that is why we are so subtly influenced by it. There are vague memories in our souls of those misty centuries when the world was in its childhood."⁹ Holmes (or Conon Doyole) is here conflicting, in a slightly confusing manner, two of Daarwin's ideas regarding evolution.

The first of these can be found in Chapter XIX of *The Descent of Man*, where, while discussing sexual selection in humans, and the role played by "Voice and Musical Powers", Darwin states, "...the suspicion does not appear improbable that the progenitors of man, either the males or females, or both sexes, before they had acquired the power of expressing their mutual love in articulate language, endeavoured to charm each other

with musical notes and rhythm.... The impassioned orator, bard, or musician, when with his varied tones and cadences he excites the strongest emotions in his hearers, little suspects that he uses the same means by which, at an extremely remote period, his half-human ancestors aroused each other's ardent passions, during their mutual courtship and rivalry."¹⁰

The second idea is that great commonplace of Victorian biology, summed up in the catchy but erroneous phrase, "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny". This has since been discarded by biologists but had a vogue in that latter half of the 19th century — thanks, in large measure, to Darwin's own comments on the matter in his *The Origin of Species*. "Embryology rises greatly in interest, when we thus look at the embryo as a picture, more or less obscured, of the common parent form of each great class of animals."¹¹

The other mention of Darwin in *A Study in Scarlet* is in the whimsically sarcastic description of the accounts of the "Brixton Mystery" in the different London newspapers, each with its own foibles and prejudices. It is the *Daily Telegraph* that "after alluding airily to the Vehmgericht, aqua to fana, Carbonari, the Marchioness de Brinvillers, the Darwinian theory, the principles of Malthus, and the Ratcliff Highway murders ... concluded by admonishing the government and advocating a closer watch over foreigners in England."¹² This droll list, parodying the style of contemporary newspaper reportage is nonetheless significant for the way in which Darwin is followed immediately by Malthus — as clear an indication as any that Sir Arthur, or at any rate, Dr. John H. Watson, had more than a passing knowledge of, and interest in, Darwin and the sources of his theory of evolution by natural selection.¹³

Darwin is also present in the last collection published by Conan Doyle, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927).

In "The Adventure of the Creeping Man", after having sorted out the mystery of the love-besotted professor who takes rejuvenating injections of langur-serum, provided by a certain Lowenstein of Prague (notice the Jewishness of the name!), and starts climbing walls as an unfortunate side-effect, Holmes muses, "When one tries to rise above Nature one is liable to fall below it. The highest type of man may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny."

Watson continues describing his friend: "He sat musing for a little with the phial in his hand, looking at the clear liquid within. "When

I have written to this man [Lowenstein's supplier in England, one Dorak] and told him I hold him criminally responsible for the poisons which he circulates, we will have no more trouble. But it may recur. Others may find a better way. There is danger there — a very real danger to humanity. Consider, Watson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become?"¹⁴

What Holmes seems to be doing here is considering the awful alternative to the unchecked triumph of Darwinian evolution. If Darwinian evolution is not allowed to reign, Conan Doyle seems to be suggesting, there can be no hope of progress. In fact, Conan Doyle explicitly invokes the notion of regress, and does so in Darwinian terms: "the highest type of man may revert to the animal". One notices, immediately, the use of the word "revert" to link the highest type of man to the animal.

The *second contention* of this paper is that Darwin's notions of the ultimately beneficial effects of evolution by natural selection, a process that Darwin saw (particularly in *The Descent of Man*) as leading to a general improvement of the human species, played a prominent part in Conan Doyle's conception of the role and functions of the detective in society.

While it is possible to argue that Conan Doyle's conception is in keeping with prevailing Victorian notions of progress and, thus, independent of Darwin, I would contend that without the *mechanism* of natural selection as propounded by Darwin, one cannot account for the role played by Sherlock Holmes in the betterment of human society.

The Origin of Species ends on a note of optimism: "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production, of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."¹⁵ I have no doubt that Darwin here draws attention quite deliberately to the law of gravity. It is as if he is saying that his law (of natural selection) is as universal as gravity, and its effects on human existence as

fundamental — and (unlike gravity, which is value-neutral) beneficial.

This notion of nature as ultimately benevolent is made explicit in *The Descent of Man*. Darwin ends his chapter "On the Development of the Intellectual and Moral Faculties during Primeval and Civilised Times" with this sentence: "It is apparently a truer and more cheerful view that progress has bene much more general than retrogression; that man has raised, though by slow and interrupted steps, from a lowly condition to the highest standard as yet attained by him in knowledge, morals and religion."¹⁶ And to further underline the lesson, as it were, the final paragraph of the book, begins thus: "Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hopes for a still higher destiny in the distant future."¹⁷

Note the phrase "a still higher destiny in the distant future". Darwinian evolution, it is clear, is a process leading inexorably to higher things, and nature is identified as the agent which makes such beneficial change possible. Darwin suggests that left to herself, nature will weed out the unfit, the morally corrupt, the aesthetically displeasing.

It is no surprise, therefore, that criminals are seen as not only *morally* subhuman, their *bodies*, too, bear the imprint of their less-than-humanity (sub-humanity). They are both metaphysically (morally) and physically (aesthetically) corrupt.

In *A Study in Scarlet*, for example, the real criminals are Drebbler and Strangerson and their murderer (the evocatively named Jefferson Hope) is the wronged man, who is, morally speaking, innocent.¹⁸ Observing Drebbler's dead body, Watson notes that he has a "low forehead, blunt nose, and prognathous jaw" which gives him "a singularly sinuous and ape-like appearance"; his sub-human-ness is magnified by "his writing unnatural posture".¹⁹

In the second Holmes novel, the magnificently imperialist and orientalist *The Sign of Four* (1989), there is the savage Tonga, who is "a little black man... with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled dishevelled hair", a "savage, distorted creature", with features "deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty", who grins and chatters "with half animal fury".²⁰

The examples could be multiplied many times.

The unnatural, subhuman body of the criminal formed the subject of the emerging science of criminal anthropology, the landmark text of which was Havelock Ellis's *The Criminal* published in the same year as *The Sign of Four* (1890).

In *The Criminal*, Eillis postulates an essential criminal physiognomy, which is, as Ronald R. Thomas has shown us,²¹ conflicted with the physiognomy of the colonial figure — both of them deviating sharply from the norm of Englishness. "When the physiology of the criminal is fully delineated by Ellis, we find it consistently resembling the bodies of the "primitive" inhabitants of the colonies," Thomas reminds us.²² Ellis himself makes this clear towards the end of his analysis, "Perhaps the most general statement to be made is that criminals present a far larger proportion of anatomical abnormalities than the ordinary European population. Now this is precisely the characteristic of the lower human races : they present a far larger proportion of anatomical abnormalities than the ordinary European population."²³

This paper's *third contention* is that one of the vital functions of the detective, as found in late 19th century fiction, is to aid natural selection by ensuring that non- and sub- human individuals (criminals) are prevented from perverting the normal course of Darwinian evolution. In fact, the detective becomes, like nature herself, a "selector", ensuring "the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life."²⁴

We recall Holmes's comment about "the survival of the least fit" and his query, "What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become?" It is the detective's job to prevent precisely this kind of eventuality. To allow nature to work her beneficial task of improving the species unhindered. To make sure that those who survive are, in fact, the most, not the least, fit.

In this, the detective has Darwin's complete approval.

In his discussion of "Natural Selection as affecting Civilised Nations" in *The Descent of Man*. Darwin makes the point that "[w]ith savages the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated" but "[w]e civilised men... do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecilic, the maimed; and the sick; we institute poor laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one" so that the "weak members of civilised society propagate their kind". This, he writes, "must be highly injurious to the race of

man". But, having said, this, he accounts for this "check" on natural selection by saying that this is "the noblest part of our nature", our uniquely human sympathy and morality, and concludes that "we must bear without complaining the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kind."

Yet, "[a]lthough civilisation checks in many ways the action of natural selection", it exerts selective pressures of other kinds. The skilled and able are favoured in occupations, thus, "there will be some tendency to an increase both in the number and the standard of the intellectually able." Further, and more important for us, "some elimination of the worst dispositions is always in progress even in the most civilised nations. Malefactors are executed, or imprisoned for long periods, so that they cannot freely transmit their bad qualities. Melancholic and insane persons are confined, or commit suicide." And so on and so forth.

If this was not explicit enough support, consider what Darwin writes a few sentences on. "In the breeding of domestic animals, the elimination of those individuals, though few in number, which are in any marked manner inferior, is by no means an unimportant element towards success. This especially holds good with injurious characters which tend to reappear through reversion, such as blackness in sheep; and with mankind some of the worst dispositions, which occasionally without any assignable cause make their appearance in families, may perhaps be reversions to a savage state, from which we are not removed by very many generations. This view seems indeed recognised in the common expression that such men are the black sheep of the family."

We must note here a few things. First, the linking of "inferior" individuals with the "savage state", which recalls Ellis's description of the criminal (and the Andaman Islander of *The Sign of Four*). Second the implicit encouragement given to the "elimination" of such "black sheep". Finally, the use of the word "reversions" which is the same word Conan Doyle puts in Holmes's mouth when he has the great man say, "The highest type of man may *revert* to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny." (My italics.)

It is the detective's job to prevent such reversions and he has Darwin's blessings to guide him in his task.

However, as the 19th century drew to a close, writers turned away from the confident optimism and belief in progress of their predecessors,

to a more aestheticised, "decadent" poetics. They began to question the earlier confidence in the ability of human reason to discover the final cause/s of all phenomena, natural or otherwise. There is no time here to discuss *why* this happened. Nonetheless, it might be instructive to consider a novel from the fin de siècle, which, to me, seems to be a deliberately anti-Darwinian (and, if my preceding arguments have held any water, anti-Doylean) statement that deliberately subverts the categories within which the classic detective novel (such as those starring Holmes) functions.

This is Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*,²⁵ published in 1897, a few weeks before a similar, though much more famous work, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In fact, legend has it that Marsh (1857-1915), real name Richard Bernard Heldmann) and Stoker had a bet as to who could write a novel of horror the quickest. Marsh won.

In *The Beetle*, Marsh takes elements from detective and gothic fiction and serves up a distinctly non-teleological, non-progressive, anti-Darwinian, "open" text. It is not possible to summarise the bizarre plot of the novel without doing it injustice. Nonetheless, for the sake of comprehension, I shall attempt to provide a bare outline of its plotting and structure.

The story of *The Beetle* is told by four characters, whose first person narratives divide the novel in the ratio 1:2:1:2. The first narrator is the impoverished clerk Robert Holt, who, driven by hunger and the desperate need for a resting place in a rainy night takes refuge (after having been denied admission into the casual ward of a workhouse) in what appears to be an abandoned house on the outskirts of London. He discovers, to his horror, that the house contains a hideous "huge, slimy evil-smelling" cockroach-like creature which apparently has the power to paralyse Holt's will and which "embraces" Holt, in a disgusting parody of human passion.²⁶

The house also has a strange sickly inhabitant, who lies in bed, a wrinkled, yellow, sub-human with a huge nose, practically no chin, and enormous, hypnotic eyes. "Escape them I could not, while, as I endeavoured to meet them, it was as if I shrivelled into nothingness. Never before had I realised what was meant by the power of the eye. They held me enchained, helpless, spell-bound. I felt that they could do with me as they would; and they did."²⁷

This peculiar individual renders Holt completely will-less, takes

control of his mind, and forces him to commit a burglary in the house of the great upcoming statesman, Paul Lessingham. And to prevent Lessingham from interfering with Holt's assigned task, this individual gives him the mantra, "THE BEETLE!"²⁸

Sure enough, when Lessingham hears the words, he is, literally, struck down. Holt escapes with the goods he had been asked to steal from Lessingham and accidentally runs into "a tall, slenderly built man, with a long, drooping moustache" who has "some quality of sunshine in his handsome face".²⁹

This sunny individual is Syudney Atherton, Esquire, who has the second narrative, which is twice the length of Bolt's. Atherton is a man of genius, an inventor, and madly in love with his childhood companion, Miss Marjorie Lindon. She, however, does not reciprocate his love, secretly engaged, as she is, to the redoubtable Lessingham.³⁰

Already we can see some of the paradigmatic characters of the classic detective novel in *The Beetle*. There is the impoverished victim and unwilling criminal accomplice, Robert Bolt; the physically repulsive, foreign, mysterious mastermind of crime; the brilliant intellectual, Sydney atherton; the charming, noble, charitable, high-minded lady of looks and fortune, Marjorie Lindon; and the Great Man with a Past, Paul Lessingham.

There are multiple narratives in Conan Doyle. Usually of three sorts — Dr. Watson's wrong-headed and straightforward chronological narration; Holmes's astonishing reconstruction of the true sequence of events from his careful analysis of clues and facts; and the captured criminal's confirmation of Holmes' diagnosis with additional information as regards the motives and other antecedents of the crime. In the short stories this third narrative is usually dispensed with. They serve to cast light upon events that seemed (especially in Watson's telling of them) shadowy,*mysterious and inexplicable.

Using a method which, as I have suggested, is essentially Darwinian, Sherlock Holmes/Conan Doyle uses these multiple narratives to weave together a set of apparently unconnected, even discrete, events into a coherent, casual, linear narrative. The detective, by reconstructing past events, not only illuminates the present state of things but also provides reassurance of a future which will be equally subject to logical explication.

The task of the detective is to restore order where there is none, to provide a coherent narrative in the face of apparent chaos, and thus demonstrate the primacy of logic and reason.

Sydney Atherton is able to connect Paul Lessingham's fear of the beetle to events in his past; he is also responsible for the strange individual revealing her (for it is a she - much to the relief of homophobic Victorian audiences, I should imagine - considering her embraces of Holt) capacity for near-instantaneous transformation into beetle-form; and, in the process, discovering her origins in an obscure Egyptian sect ("the children of Isis").³¹ But, and this is crucial, he is not able to provide a believable (no matter how fantastical) explanation either for the transformation of human to insect or for the hypnotic powers exercised by the child of Isis over their victims.

These hypnotic powers not only entrap poor Holt, but also Marjorie Lindon, who has the third narrative, which is, significantly, the same length as that of Holt's. (Both are victims, one is a woman and the other a lowly clerk, neither can/should be the equal of educated, intelligent, upper-class men.) This narrative tells us little we do not know already. It shows Marjorie to be a plucky lady, a brave little woman, worthy to be the bride of the redoubtable Lessingham (whom, incidentally, Sydeny calls "the Apostle"!), but with her proper share of feminine weaknesses (she is scared of beetles and cockroaches);³² it adds to the sense of mystery and horror (in the way in which Marjorie is "possessed"); and, structurally, it brings the two victims (Holt and Marjorie) together (Holt faints on the road outside Marjorie's house and she takes him in and nurses him).

The final long narrative is that of the "Hon. Augustus Champnell, Confidential Agent",³³ a Holmesian detective if ever there was one. And, infuriatingly, his account tells us almost nothing about the whys and wherefores of either the particular beetle of the tale or the children of Isis.

Lessingham's terror is explained as a combination of his memories of, and fear of retribution from the ghastly cult of the children of Isis (who revelled in subjecting White women, especially Englishwomen, to unspeakable outrages and then burning them alive), in whose tender clutches he had spent many a month, as the erotic plaything of a beautiful young woman (who changed into a monstrous beetle when Lessingham tried to choke her to death).

The beetle of the story tracked down to the house where Bolt had first encountered her. Despite the best efforts of Champnell, Atherton, and Lessingham,, she manages to escape, disguised as an Arab man (note the foreigner motif), taking her two victims (Bolt and Marjorie) with her. Bolt dies, and an exciting chase takes place, culminating in the three men hiring a "special" (a privately hired train with a single carriage) to catch the beetle and rescue Marjorie.

The reader who expects a denouement which will revel at least some of the nuts and bolts of the whole fantastic story and how it came about, will be left sorely disappointed. For the villain is vanquished, not by a judicious combination of bravery and brains, but by some uncoupled goods carriages into which the train carrying the beetle smashes!

There is one last chapter, narrated by Champnell, which ties up the loose threads. (Marjorie, predictably enough, survives and marries Paul Lessingham.) The novel ends with these (for the lover of detective fiction, deeply unsatisfactory) sentences : "On the subject of the Mystery of the Beetle I do not propose to pronounce a confident opinion. Atherton and I have talked it over many a time and at the end we have got no 'farrarder'. So far as I am personally concerned, experience has taught me that there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, and I am quite prepared to believe that the so-called Beetle, which others saw, but I never, was - or is, for it cannot certainly be shown that the Thing is not still existing - a creature born neither of God nor man." ³⁴

In this final paragraph, Marsh makes explicit his anti-Darwinism. He leaves us with a text that remains stubbornly resistant to closure. An unfinished narrative that challenges our capacity to tell logically-constructed causal tales that make sense out of an apparently chaotic reality. His villain, the Beetle, is living proof of humanity's ability to transform - not into the optimistic "still higher destiny in the distant future" ³⁵ — but into one of the lowest forms of existence.

The Beetle, in the final analysis, presents us with a pessimistic view of life, one that stands in sharp contrast to the optimism (despite occasional doubts) of a Conan Doyle or a Darwin. In its depiction of the possible survival of the least fit it anticipates the doubts and uncertainties of the coming century and, in this respect, is a true product of the fin de siècle. ³⁶

REFERENCES

1. I am indebted to Sajni Mukherjee, Bikash Chakravarty and Shyamal Kumar Sarkar for their, sometimes inadvertent, help in the writing of this essay.
2. Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea : Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (London 1995), pp. 138, 234, 484.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 21
4. George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass, 1988; reprinted Chicago, 1991), p. 15.
5. Michael Ghiselin, *The Triumph of the Darwinian Method* (Chicago, 1969; repr., 1984), p. 4. quoted in Levine *op. cit.*, p. 15.
6. George John Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin : An Exposition of the Darwinian Theory and a Discussion of Post-Darwinian Questions* (Chicago, 1896, second edition), Chapter I. All italics his. (Incidentally, Romanes''s preface to his book is dated 19 April 1892 — ten years (to the day!) from Darwin's death on 19th April 1882).
7. As they do right from the first Holmes story — Gregson arrests the wrong man in *A Study in Scarlet*! It is to be noted that Romanes had warned against constructing hypotheses without adequate data/facts, which he saw as the other evil besetting biology before the Darwinian revolution (the first being the tendency to be satisfied with the mere accumulation of data/facts, with no attempt to theorize/hypothesize from them). The tendency to theorize without adequate data, he characterised as the Bugbear of Speculation. (Romanes, Chp. I, his *capitals*.)
8. As Holmes asks Dr. Watson to do in *The Sign of Four*. Ch. 6.
9. *A Study in Scarlet*, Ch. 5.
10. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New Jersey 1981; facsimile reprint of the first edition published in London, 1871), Part II, Ch. XIX : "Secondary Sexual Characters of Man", p. 337.
11. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London, 1984; reprint of the first edition published in London 1859), p. 428.
12. *A Study in Scarlet*, Ch. 6.
13. *A Study in Scarlet* also has an indirect reference to Darwinian evolution. This is the magazine article "The Book of Life", which Watson dismisses as far fetched and exaggerated, and which states, from a drop of water, a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whoever we are shown a single link of it. The writer of the article is, of course, revealed to be Holmes himself — further proof, if any was needed, of his Darwinian origins. See *A Study in Scarlet*, Ch. 2 "The Science of Deduction"

14. See the concluding paragraph of "The Adventure of the Creeping Man".
15. *Origin*, concluding sentences.
16. *Descent*, Ch. V. concluding sentences.
17. *Ibid*, Ch. XXI, first sentence of final paragraph.
18. We must remember that the person who commits a crime to avenge a (greater moral) wrong is never seen as a criminal in Conan Doyle's books. Notice how Jefferson Hope's name recalls a great American president as well as the power that drives the man on his long quest for just revenge.
19. *A Study in Scarlet*, Ch. 3.
20. *The Sign of Four*, Ch. 10.
21. Ronald R. Thomas, "The Fingerprint of the Foreigner : Colonising the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Criminal Anthropology" (*English Literary History*, Vol. 61, No. 3; Fall 1994), pp. 655-83.
22. Thomas, *op.cit.*, p. 663.
23. Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal* (1914 ed.) p. 258, quoted in Thomas, *op.cit.*, p. 665.
24. The Phrase forms part of the full title of *The Origin*.
25. Richard Marsh, *The Beetle* (London, 1897); reprinted in Graham Greene and Hugh Greene (eds.), *Victorian Villainies* (New York, 1984; London; 1985).
26. *Ibid.*, p. 452.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 454.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 468; Marsh's capitals.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 484.
30. It may be noticed that although Atherton is a sunny individual and a genius, his inventions include weapons of mass destruction, which, he feels (anticipating the nuclear race of the Cold War!), are the only guarantors of peace. This characterisation of Atherton is of a piece with the novel's generally pessimistic, subversive, anti-Darwinian tone.
31. *Op. cit.*, p. 545 and 632.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 598.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 626.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 715.
35. See note 12, above.
36. It is possible to argue that, for all his anti-Darwinism, Marsh could not create a wholly non-Darwinian text. After all, Paul Lessingham and Marjorie Lindon survive, and Marsh makes it clear that judged by any set of criteria, both of them are eminently fit. Their marriage, with its promise of offspring, is — in Darwinian terms — an extremely desirable outcome for the human species. Yet, what if the beetle returns?. Will Paul Lessingham, once again, revert to a gibbering idiot? In any case, his unnatural fear of the beetle is demonstration of what may lie under the veneer of urbane sophistication and fitness.

COMPARATIVE POSTCOLONIALITIES AND THE DIALECTICS OF SUBALTERN DISCOURSE

It important for us to identify the new victims and the new victimizers in the neocolonial era-for we do not live in a postcolonial era as the postmodernists claim. We must struggle together both locally and globally. The local struggle must be combined with global or international struggle and solidarity. We must fight on all fronts...We must carry on a continuous resistance, a continuous dissidence, which will forge the way to a better future for all the peoples of the world.

—Nawal El Saadawi

No uprising fails... Each one is a step in the right direction.

—Salud Algabre

From 1996 to 1998, we celebrated in the Philippines and here in the United States the one-hundred year anniversary of the Philippine revolution against Spain. December 10, 1998, marked the centennial of the Treaty of Paris marking the end of the Spanish-American War, an event which ushered in the carnage of the Philippin-American War from 1899 to 1903—the “first Vietnam”, one historian believes—and beyond, as well as the colonial domination of Cuba and the annexation of Puerto Rico; the latter two events still haunt us not just with spectres but with the lived experience of pain, denials, and ordeals of servitude. We can never completely “postalize” these *Nachtraglich* repercussions because to do so would just confirm the reality—Puerto Rico is recognized by the world as a U.S. colony, and Fidel Castro’s Cuba (like North Korea and other so-called “rogue” states) will not go away like a bad dream, even though Washington hopes they will fade away like the Sandinistas, Maurice Bishop’s “New Jewel Movement”, the FMLN of El Salvador, Kim Il Sung, Amilcar Cabral, Che Guevarra, and others who have now dissolved into the posthistorical folds of the “New World Order”. Unfortunately, the Pinochets of this world

are still around — and their victims will not allow them their solipsistic retirement.

Postcolonial theory warns us not to engage in the “politics of blame” and praise. Indeed, can I as a subaltern intellectual speak and discriminate as to who is guilty and who is innocent? Complexity and various rhetorical and ethical refinements will be sacrificed. Given the hybridity, mixing, creolization, syncretism, in-betweenness and just the sheer all-encompassing ambivalence and heterogeneity of relations between the postcolonized and the ex-colonizers, I would in fact be guilty of some cardinal sins: totalization, imposition of metanarrative, universalization, etc. Despite the heterogeneous locus of enunciation, I would plead guilty to reiterating a commonplace generalization here: the Spanish American War established the geopolitical place of the United States as a imperial power whose apogee after World War II, in the *pax American* of the Cold War, persists though in attenuated form, enabling the rise of neocolonial states like the Philippine, Taiwan, South Korea, and others in Africa and Latin America. The postcolonial position of genuine sovereignty for many people is still germinal, the embryo of wish-fulfillment.

Let me post a few reminders. After the end of Francis Fukuyama’s history, in the wake of the Gulf War, the Chiapas revolt in Mexico, and Japan’s recession, the “Asian Tigers” — in particular South Korea and Thailand — collapsed, and Indonesia soon unravelled. Just a few weeks ago, Brazil was saved by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Spasmodic ups and downs in the stock markets, currency devaluations and capital flight from the peripheral “emerging market” economies plague the globalized “free market” despite “structural adjustment programs” imposed by the World Bank (WB)/International Monetary (IMF) Fund. Loan defaults, production cutbacks, mass layoffs, and bankruptcies are rocking the whole planet. A new world depression (read: crisis of transnational capital) seems brewing. Globalization is on the rampage — what else is new?

Last November, an international conference on “Alternatives to Globalization” was held in the Philippines with delegates from 31 countries. What is meant by globalization? In brief, it is the neoliberal ideology of the free market, the capitalist market of exchange values, as the only way to economic growth and social progress everywhere.

It is the general offensive of monopoly capital (transnational corporations or TNCs) to maximize the extraction of profit and accelerate capital accumulation everywhere, particularly through the use of modern technology (such as robotics and information technology), and, more importantly, the through the political dikta of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization mediated through the triad multilateral institutions: the IMF/WB, and World Trade Organization. Supposed to refurbish the old nostrum of "modernization", globalization enables rapid economic restructuring, centralization of capital, takeover and control of production resources in undeveloped societies and weak nation-states by TNCs based in the industrialized metropolises (Europe, Japan, North America). The conference ended with a resolution which reads in part:

Globalization has worsened the effects of destructive paradigm of 'growth and development.' Instead of economic prosperity and social stability that it promised for all nations, globalization has brought about economic turmoil, political and social tension, and widespread devastation to the world's people and resources...The gap between the rich and poor in all nations, industrial and non-industrial alike, and between the rich and poor countries in widening rather than narrowing...

Everywhere globalization is eroding the gains of social movements in all aspects (political, social and cultural). There is a general regression of democracy, as economic impositions by states entail increasing human rights violations, not only of economic, social and cultural rights, but of political and civil rights as well. In the third world, as the majority of the people are marginalized economically, they are also disempowered politically (*Cyberdyaryo*, 12 November 1998.)

No doubt, from the postcolonial orthodoxy deriving its imprimatur from the "Holy Trinity" of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, that resolution will be dismissed as "old hat" radicalism vitiated with tired Marxist clichés and reductionist excesses. But surely, the owl of Minerva hasn't flown yet over postcolonial theory's territory to bring this tidings of disaster and awaken the acolytes and epigones from premature dogmatic slumber. While global unemployment has gone beyond 40 percent and 90 percent of the world's inhabitants suffer from poverty, do we still dare not whisper the tabooed words 'finance capital'? For Fredric Jameson (1998), this new stage of capitalism characterized

by speculation in the money market, monetary equivalence superimposed on land values, space, etc. — in brief, in the intensification of the forces of reification — have generated precisely those tell-tale affects of contingency, indeterminacy, ambivalence, borderline crossing, displacements, dislocations, transcultural negotiations, and diasporic exchanges whose fragments are being continually plotted by postcolonial theory. Such theory turns out to be shamanistic reading of symptoms. Indeed, the repertoire of postcolonial tropes condense with uncanny prescience the full measure of globalized financial transactions — except that the practitioners of this rhetorical strategy or language-game pride themselves in disavowing any knowledge of the material/historical determinants of their performance. The warning one should heed then is: You might ignore globalized finance capital, but it will surely not ignore you.

One more reminder not as recent as the unconscionable “killing fields” of Kosovo and East Timor but equally heuristic and instructive. Retaliating for the bombing of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, the United States government unleashed a barrage of deadly Tomahawk missiles into Afghanistan and Sudan, two of the rogue states declared to be harboring terrorists, *aka* Islamic fundamentalists, hostile to the United States and its Western allies. This in a time of the “New World Order”, when (according to Fukuyama) history ended with the demise of the Soviet Union and the worldwide triumph of liberal capitalism. But aren’t we in a postality epoch where colonialism and capitalism have both been superseded, where universalizing paradigms and metanarratives have gone the way of dinosaurs?

I

By all indications, postcolonial orthodoxy expressed in the writings of Bhabha, Spivak, and their epigones, would register protest against a revanchist U.S. imperialism. At the same time it would condemn the totalizing philosophy of Osama bin Laden and the Manichean strategy of those fundamentalistic nationalists who reject the hybrid and heterogeneous reality of societies victimized by transnational corporations. Lest I be accused of caricaturing postcolonial critics, I refer my readers to the thorough and judicious appraisal of this newly institutionalized discourse by Arif Dirlik in his somewhat neglected book *The Postcolonial*

Aura. Dirlik points out the mystification of the relations of culture and power when postcolonial critics concentrate on Eurocentric ideology and foundationalism as their main target. The now scriptural text *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft *et al*) privileges the hermeneutics of colonial discourse as a desideratum of the new academic discipline. The aura of the "interstitial" and hybrid preempts any original indigenous resistance, discursive or otherwise, from the subaltern natives (Schulze-Engler). Among other scholars cited by Dirlik, O'Hanlon and Washbrook bewail the conservative and authoritarian nature of the solutions offered by postcolonial theory to the problems of the contemporary world: "methodological individualism, the depoliticising insulation of social from material domains, a view of social relations that is in practice extremely voluntaristic, the refusal of any kind of programmatic politics" (66). From another stance, Aijaz Ahmad considers the doctrine of the postcolonial transhistoricity of colonialism as an ideological alibi to expunge "determinate histories" and determinate structures of power, releasing them from accountability. One German scholar, noting how the postcolonial proliferation of differences inaugurates new hegemonies, recently asked: "Where is the protest against SAP (Structural Adjustment Programs) universalism?" (Stummer)

I suspect that this has been said before in other ways—think of the expanding archive of postcolonial theory/ postcolonial discourse, from Said's classic *Orientalism* to Spivak and Bhabha's voluminous essays to the ripostes such as Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory*, Arif Dirlik's *The Postcolonial Aura*, and provocative essays by Ann McClintock and Ella Shohat, in particular — a veritable academic industry, indeed. In the last two years, aside from my work, three books have come out that inventory the postcolonial archive in a thorough if somewhat tautologous manner: Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory* (1997), Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, and Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998). Institutionalization, together with the canonization of the "Holy Trinity" (Said, Spivak and Bhabha), have generated the routine repertoire of rituals, clichés, formulae, platitudes, mixed with "received" commonsense relished in the doxology of Establishment poststructuralism and pragmatic metaphysics.

Common among these three books is the positive appraisal of the ideology of difference. Recognition of Otherness, decolonizing the

ethnocentric gaze, radical indeterminacy immanent in hybridity, diaspora heterogeneity, exile, displacement, dislocation, borderline crossing, and so on, constitute the recurrent themes, motifs, and archetypal *topoi* of postcolonial discourse. There are of course the classics: Said's *Orientalism*, Fanon's *Black Face/White Masks*, Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and (as the contrapuntal voice, Ahmad's *In Theory*), together with the key texts of Salman Rushdie, Wilson Harris, Jean Rhys, and a few Africans. Leela Gandhi eulogizes the "analytic versatility and theoretical resilience" of the postcolonial practitioners. Ania Loomba's substantial survey provides ample archival background, with a show of painstaking evenhandedness toward adversaries of postcolonial orthodoxy. However, like Gandhi, she subscribes to the general condemnation of Marxism as guilty of economism, totalizing, humanism, teleology, the neglect of gender, sexuality, racial and ethnic difference, and other minor crimes. Unlike Gandhi, however, Loomba is not sanguine about globalization. She concurs with Dipesh Chakrabarty's aim of "provincializing Europe" (255), but her own endorsement of "empirical specificity" returns us back to the slogan of localism and particularism that she herself finds fault with. Shades of melancholy irony in a peculiarly imploding Leibnizian conceit.

A nuanced dialogue between Marxism and post-structuralism recommended by Loomba seems to be attempted by Bart Moore-Gilbert in his detailed inventory of the writings of Said, Spivak and Bhabha. However, his concluding judgement that there is a fit between postcolonial theory and postcolonial criticism (*e.g.*, the affinities between Bhabha and Wilson Harris' ideas) and that we need to apply Spivak's nostrum of "strategic essentialism" (202) with qualifications, are anticlimactically disappointing. With some reservations, Moore-Gilbert also supports Laclau-Mouffe's strategy of multiple positioning or "equivalential articulation" (199). He commends Ranajit Guha's liberal pluralism: "...It seems to me that a choice between the predominant paradigms, or an attempted synthesis of them, is perhaps equally unnecessary if one applies an historical and differential perspective to the question of the heterogeneity of the 'postcolonial'. ... Because postcolonial histories, and their presents, are so varied, no one definition of the "postcolonial" can claim to be correct, at the expense of all the others, and consequently a variety of interrelated models of identity, positionality and cultural/

critical practice are both possible and necessary" (203). Not to worry; we are all open-minded, cosmopolitan and catholic in taste. This is obviously a species of pragmatic agnosticism, at best an old-fashioned eclecticism that exudes the aura of the dilettantish gentlemen of letters whiling away time in the English countryside. Moore Gilbert tries to be tactful, lucid, and impartial — at the cost of tolerating the differential politics of globalized transnational corporations to ride roughshod over millions in the so-called postcolonial or neocolonized South. In our three authors, as well as in postcolonial mimicry in general, a crippling category mistake is made by confusing culture with ideology, thus forfeiting any attempt to do what Ella Shohat calls for: to interrogate the concept of the "post-colonial" and contextualize it historically, geopolitically and culturally (111). Or else, there is only the ideology of the enemy to be exorcised or stigmatized as reductive, deterministic, essentialist, and so on.

The paralysis and inconsequentiality of postcolonial theory and criticism on the face of globalized capitalism are patently clear not to warrant rehearsing anymore the objections of Ahmad, Dirlik, and others. This is not just because this genre is devoted to specialized studies on widow-burning or British colonization of the Indian subcontinent, Australia, Canada and South Africa. The explanation is more than theoretical or discursive. Robert Young, the editor of the new magazine, *Interventions: The International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, put his finger on its symptomatology: "The rise of postcolonial studies coincided with the end of Marxism as the defining political, cultural and economic objective of much of the third world" (1998, pp 8-9). This diagnosis is more wishful thinking than a factual statement. To be sure, the "third world" as a homogenized entity never claimed to elevate Marxism as its all-encompassing objective; no one does this, anyway. Another agenda lurks in the background.

Postcolonialism seems to require a postMarxism as "supplement," a prophylactic clearing of the ground. What is meant by postMarxism or the "end of Marxism" is really the reconfiguration of the international class struggle between the imperial metropolises and the revolting masses of the periphery. It signifies the end of the bourgeois national project initiated by the Bandung Conference led by Nehru, Nasser, and Sukarno (Ahmad 1995). This project of postcolonial states modernizing on the basis of anticommunism and pragmatic philosophy, reliance on Soviet

military support and cynical plying of the "American card", collapse with the bankruptcy of most neocolonial regimes the succumbed to World Bank/IMF "structural adjustment programs" and conditionalities. The killing of Salvador Allende in 1973 signalled the close of an epoch in which "national liberation" struggles, inspired with ideals learned from the Marxist tradition, led the anticolonial processes that led to the victories of Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Amílcar Cabral, and the Sandinistas, notwithstanding the reversals and setbacks witnessed afterwards. With the neoconservative reaction encapsulated by the programs of Thatcher and Reagan, we witness the emergence of poststructuralism and various postmodernist trends with their reformist and anti-revolutionary program (Lazarus). In this context, postcolonial theory with its nominalist/relativist orientation appears to be invariably parasitic on the larger cultural terrain of comparative, interdisciplinary, and area studies in the Western academy.

In brief, without too much sociological analysis of the position of diasporic intellectuals in the universities of North America and Europe, one can say that postcolonial discourse and theory accompanies the restoration of the periphery of postcolonial societies to a comprador role — for those that have evolved to a more competitive stage of capitalist development. The new "third world" to which postcolonialism resonates designates those countries that have gained sufficient industrial modernization; this includes the big countries of Latin America, East Asia (China, South Korea, Taiwan), Eastern Europe, and the former USSR. A new fourth world has appeared comprised of most countries in Africa and the Arab world, including many that have not embarked on any sustained program of industrialization: sub-Saharan Africa, the West Indies, Central America, Bangladesh, and Indonesia (Amin 1994). Most of these remain neocolonized by transnational corporations and the consortia of finance capital under the WB/IMF aegis. Postcolonial legitimacy stems from this new form of national differentiation in the world system of globalized capital.

II

Postcolonial normatively inheres in its claim to discover complexity and difference hitherto submerged by totalizing axioms. The principle of uneven and combined development, as adumbrated by Marx and Engels,

Lenin, Trotsky, and others in the socialist tradition, renders all the rhetoric of ambivalence, syncretism, and hybridity redundant. But this principle has been ignored or neglected because a linear teleological narrative of social evolution has been ascribed to classical Marxism, conflating it with ideas of unidirectional progress and developmentalism from Jean Bodin to W.W. Rostow and the gurus of modernization theory (Patterson). I want to elaborate on this distortion of Marx's position because it functions as the crucial basis for arguing the alternative rationality of unpredictable social change offered by postcolonial theory. The metaphysical idealism underlying postcolonial dogma, its hostility to historical materialism (the dialectical theory of comprehensive social transformation), and its complicity with the "New World Order" managed by transnational capital can be made transparent by juxtaposing it with Marx's thesis of uneven and unsynchronized process of development in specific social formations.

In essence, the most blatant flaw of postcolonial orthodoxy (I use the rubric to designate the practice of Establishment postcolonialism employing a poststructuralist organon) lies in its refusal to grasp the category of capitalist modernities in all its global ramifications, both the regulated and the disarticulated aspects. A mechanistic formula is substituted for a dialectical analytic of historical motion. Consequently, in the process of a wide-ranging critique of the Enlightenment ideals by postcolonial critics, the antithesis of capitalism — proletarian revolution and the socialist principles first expounded by Marx and Engels — is dissolved in the logic of the global system of capital without further discrimination. The obsession to do away with totality, foundations, universals, and systemic analysis leads to a mechanical reification of ideas and terminology, as well as the bracketing of the experiences they refer to, culminating in a general relativism, skepticism, and nominalism — even nihilism — that undercuts the postcolonial claim to truth, plausibility, or moral high ground (see Habermas, Dews, Callinicos). A typical exercise in repudiating a historical materialist approach can be seen in Dipesh Chakrabarty's objection to the institutional history in which Europe operates as "the sovereign theoretical subject". Modernity — "the meta-narrative of the nation state" — is understood as European imperialism in collusion with third-world nationalisms. What is at stake is the question of a history of India written from the subaltern (peasantry) point

of view. Chakrabarty calls for "radical critique and transcendence of liberalism (*i.e.*, of the bureaucratic construction of citizenship, modern state, and bourgeois privacy that classical political philosophy has produced)" (386), a call that he believes finds resonance in Marx, poststructuralism, and feminist philosophy. While he seeks to provincialize Europe by demonstrating the limits of Enlightenment rationalism (its coercive violence suppressed the heterogeneity of other cultures and civilizations), he also rejects cultural relativism and nativist histories.

Chakrabarty's obsession is to unmask, demystify, or deconstruct the themes of citizenship and the modern state as though they were permanent, transhistorical, and ubiquitous. In the end, Chakrabarty negotiates for a compromise which he labels a "Politics of despair". "I ask for a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices, the part it plays in collusion with the narratives of citizenships in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity." His intent is to unfold a radically heterogeneous world "where collectivities are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor by the nightmare of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates" (388). Not to worry. The dreams of repressed subalternity in India and elsewhere await a Foucauldian genealogical excavation that the group of elite academics like Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash, including the arch-postcolonialist Gayatri Spivak, have already begun. On the other hand, the status quo of existing property relations and asymmetries of actual power relations (articulating class, gender, locality, religion) in India remain untouched.

Central to the postcolonial malaise is the belief that history or historical narratives of colonized peoples by Europeans have been permanently damaged, hence they are useless for recovering native or indigenous originality. Eurocentric knowledge (whether expressed by Cecil Rhodes or Joseph Conrad, by Black Elk or Fray Bartolome de las Casas) can never disclose the truth about the colonized. Following Lyotard, only local narratives can have validity from now on. Unless postcolonial historians naively believe they can return to a past where local narratives of tribal groups ran parallel and never intersected, the notions of locality and place are unintelligible outside of a wider global space from which they can be identified. What is missing in the critique

of Eurocentric history is a dialectical comprehension of such relations — the relation between Europe and its Others — that precisely constitute the problem of one-sidedness, falsity, distortion, and all the evils that postcolonials discern in modernity (including Marxism as a peculiarly European invention). Parallel or coeval modernities need to be theorised within a differentiated, not centralized, ontology of determinate and concrete social formations if we don't want to relapse into essentializing metaphysics.

In 1878, Marx wrote a letter to a Russian journal that complained of a certain tendency that mistakenly elevated his hypothesis about capitalist development in Western Europe to a "suprahistorical theory". He wanted to correct the misapplication to Russia of his notion of the transition from feudalism to capitalism given in *Capital*: the emergence of capitalism premised on the expropriation of the agricultural producers can occur only when empirical preconditions exist. Russia will tend to become capitalist only if it has transformed the bulk of the peasantry into proletarians. Marx explains that this did not happen in Roman times when the means of production of the plebians or free peasants were expropriated; they became "not wage workers but an idle mob more abject than those who were called 'poor whites' in the southern United States", after this appeared not a capitalist but a slave mode of production. Marx objects to his critic's attempt to generalize the hypothetical conclusion of his empirical inquiry:

[My critic] absolutely insists on transforming my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of the general course fatally imposed on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves placed, in order to arrive ultimately at this economic formation that ensures, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social labor, the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. (It does me both too much honor and too much discredit.) [Here follows the instance of the Roman plebians.] Thus events that are strikingly analogous, but taking place in different historical milieu, lead to totally disparate results. By studying each of these developments separately, and then comparing them, one can easily discover the key to this phenomenon, but one will never arrive there with the master key of a historico-philosophical theory

whose supreme virtue consists in being suprahistorical ("Pathways", pp 109-10).

Now, it is clear that events can not be judged in themselves apart from the historical milieu, and that there is no "master key" to unlocking all phenomena — which is not to say that one doesn't need some schematic framework or methodological guidelines for gathering data, testing and evaluating them through some principle of falsifiability or verification, and finally formulating general albeit tentative observations. I think Marx was not disclaiming the validity of the notion of primitive accumulation he outlined, nor the scheme of historical development enunciated in the "preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). The fundamental insight on the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production, manifest in class struggles and in the global phenomenon of uneven development, has served as a fertile *problématique* or framework of inquiry — paradigm, if you like — in which to raise questions and clarify problems of social change and historical trajectories.

There are at least two examples in Marx's theoretical practice that evince sensitivity to the heterogeneous and disparate motions of diverse collectivities. The first deals with the subject of the Asiatic mode of production which departs from the teleological assumptions of Marx's theory of transition from the ancient and feudal to the capitalist mode of production. No necessary succession is implied in the unfolding of the transition sequence. Because the socioeconomic specificity of Asiatic society has led to a notion of despotic, stagnant and arbitrary societies quite inferior to the dynamic Western counterparts, the notion has become problematic and controversial. Karl Wittfogel's book *Oriental Despotism*, which examined the hydraulic economy of China and diverse societies under a centralized "patrimonial" bureaucracy (inspired by Max Weber's studies), however, became a weapon in the Cold War against Stalinism.

Marx and Engels first became interested in investigating non-European societies when they engaged in journalistic criticisms of British foreign policy in 1853. They noted that despotism and stagnation characterized certain societies where the state management of public works (irrigation) predominated together with the self-sufficient isolated village community, as in ancient China. Later on, in *Grundrisse*, Marx

emphasized the fact of the communal ownership of land by autarchic communities, the stable basis for the social unity embodied by the state. In *Capital*, Marx presented the Asiatic mode as one way in which the social product is communally appropriated; this system is founded on the social relations of the self-sufficient village anchored to the unity of handicrafts and agriculture. The "secret of the unchangingness of Asiatic society" rested on the absence of private property (which precluded the rise of social classes as agents of change) and the simplicity of production methods. It is of course questionable how autonomous self-sufficient villages could coexist with the powerful interventions by centralized absolutist states whose origin also needs to be elucidated.

From a Weberian perspective, the stationary Asiatic mode displayed a lack of civil society and the dominance of a centralized state apparatus. Some scholars have claimed that Marx and Engels justified the "progressive" role of British imperialism in creating private property in land and thus destroying the stationary Asiatic mode. This modernizing effect, carried out through the railway system, free press, modern army and means of communication (all technological determinates incorporated into social relations) has been used to apologize or if not legitimize imperial expansion as the only way of exploding an otherwise immutable and backward social formation. Here is Marx's own "apologia" for British rule in India written for the *New York Tribune* (June 25, 1853) in Marx's original English:

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is : Can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. (*Basic Writings* pp. 480-81)

Faced by the "cunning of Reason" (to use the Hegelian phrase), Marx counsels us to put aside "whatever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of a ancient world may have for our personal feelings" because we, tutored in Enlightenment wisdom, are also aware of the advances made possible by imperial cruelty : the destruction of barbarian egoism, the Oriental despotism which "restrained the human mind within the

smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies" (*Basic Writings*, p. 480)

Postcolonial skeptics condemn this narrative schema as reductive and positivistic. To my mind, however, it is the most graphic triangulation of opposites, a cognitive mapping of ruptures and contradictions that epitomizes the genuinely dialectical vicissitudes of history apprehended by Marx in his survey of historically specific milieus and concrete conjunctures.

The other example catalyzed by the discovery of the Asiatic mode of production is the possibility of a noncapitalist road to communism exemplified by Russia in the 19th century. In the midst of revolutionary struggles in Russia, Marx revised his early conception of Russia as "semi-Asiatic" and examined the nature of the Russian *Mir* or commune. Could it provide the foundation for socialism or arrest its advent? Marx and Engels held that it could provided that capitalist relations of production do not strangle the whole countryside and that working-class revolutions in Europe would coincide with any vast social change in Russia. Plekhanov disagreed with this, but it only proved that there is no deterministic and unilinear paradigm, or an evolutionary mechanistic formula that would dictate how stages of development would unfold. It was Stalin who decreed in 1931 that Asian societies were subsumed under the categories of slavery or feudalism, thus pursuing the path of Western European development from primitive communism and then sequentially to slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist stages. But, of course, that is not the end of the story.

It is the return of a serious concern with non-European routes to modernity in the sixties (such as the Asiatic mode and the Russian commune) that spurred discussions over dependency, uneven development and underdevelopment, world systems theory, the specificity and complexity of "third world" societies, and African socialism. The theoretical liabilities of Orientalism incurred by the Asiatic mode has been spelled out by Bryan Turner: "its theoretical function was not to analyse Asiatic society but to explain the rise of capitalism in Europe within a comparative framework. Hence Asiatic society was defined as a series of gaps — the missing middle class, the absent city, the absence of private property, the lack of bourgeois institutions — which thereby

accounted for the dynamism of Europe" (36). Nonetheless, the notion functioned as a heuristic tool that Marx deployed to eliminate any teleological determinism of evolutionary monism in his speculative instruments of historical investigation.

On the pivotal significance of these socioeconomic formation, Eric Hobsbawm calls attention to its implicit thesis of human individualization through the historical process, via exchange conceived in terms of reciprocal interactions. It is in the course of demacrating the precapitalist *Formen* — before full-fledged commodity production set in — that Marx revealed his commitment to an emancipatory if utopian vision. Whether in ancient Greek and Roman, Asiatic, or Germanic versions, these tribal communities contrasted favourably with the bourgeois epoch because "man always appears ... as the aim of production, not production as the human goal. ..." Marx continues: "In fact, however, when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc. of individuals, produced in universal exchange?" In effect, the totality of human development, "the absolute elaboration of its creative dispositions" and human powers signifies a "situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produce his totality" (*Formations*, pp 84-85). Informed by this synthesizing impulse in which dealienation of labor becomes the aim of revolutionary praxis, Marx's method of historical specification does not degenerate into the disintegrating, anomic reflex that vitiates postcolonial discourse. Marx's empathetic understanding and interpretation of the past in their uniqueness, which postcolonial hermeneutics inflates into an axiom of incommensurability, does not preclude a synoptic, all-encompassing apprehension; in fact, it presupposes that stagnant and paralyzing continuum that, as Walter Benjamin puts it, must be blasted apart to release the forces of change.

It is in this context that Marx seized the moment of "the break-up of the old village communes" in India by British imperialism as a disastrous even pregnant with its contrary. It is progressive in the sense that it releases or unfolds human potential. On the other hand, Marx believed (in a letter to Vera Zasulich in 1881) that if the Russian village commune (*mir*) was left free to pursue its "spontaneous development", then it can be the point of departure for "social regeneration in Russia". This shows that Marx, far from being a unilinear determinist, posited

the dialectical-materialist view that the peasantry can acquire a communist consciousness, depending on which aspects (the collectivist or privative) of the *nir* would be enhanced by a changing historical environment (Levine p. 175). This anticipates what Mao, Cabral, and others have recognized in appraising the conjuncture of forces in any contested situation, namely, "the sovereignty of the human factor in revolutionary warfare" (Eqbal Ahmad p. 147).

George Lichtheim reflects that Marx's ideas on the various forms of social metabolism which are crystallized in different stages of society illustrates the modes in which humans individualize themselves through the historical process of "evolving various forms of communal and private property, *i.e.*, various ways of organizing his social intercourse with nature and the — natural or artificial — preconditions of work...The forcible disruption of the Indian or Chinese village community by European capital completes the process by rendering it truly global" (85). In any case, a revolutionary Marxist position does not prescribe a causal monism nor a freewheeling causal pluralism. Gregor McLennan has summed up succinctly the dialectical imperative of the Marxist approach: "Structural principles must be complemented by, or even include, notions of individual action, natural causes, and 'accidental circumstances'. ... Nevertheless, material and social relations can be long-term, effective real structures that set firm limits to the nature and degree of practical effect that accident and even agency have" (234). In other words, Marxism views the world not as a closed totality but an "open, structured whole, with irreducible differences" (Haug 16) comprehended dialectically, mindful of the play of contradictions.

I have dwelt at length on this topic because of the postcolonial critic's insistence that the method of historical materialism is fatally compromised by its Enlightenment provenance. If Marx is a Eurocentric apologist for the "civilizing mission" of imperialism, then we should have nothing to do with his indictment of capitalism and advocacy of socialist revolution. It might be instructive to note that the charge of Eurocentrism levelled against Marx does not permit a nuanced and rigorous appraisal of his critique of bourgeois philosophy; the polemic of Eurocentrism does not distinguish the nature of capitalist modernity as a specific epochal form, one which is constituted by the complex, uneven relation between colonizer and colonized. Capitalism disappears

when all of modernity, both positive and negative elements, become ascribed to a geopolitical region (the metropole vis-à-vis the periphery) that cannot be divorced from the world-system of which it is an integral part.

Samir Amin has perspicaciously described the historical genealogy of Eurocentrism in the drive of capital to subordinate everything to exchange value, to accumulation, hence the need for standardization. But this drive to uniformity also precipitates its opposite, unequal accumulation or impoverishment of the masses. For Amin, the most explosive contradiction generated by transnational capital inheres in the centres/peripheries polarization and its corollary, the "imperialist dimension of capitalist expansion" (*Eurocentrism*, p 141). Postcolonial affirmation of Cultural difference, or the interstitial and syncretic byproducts of the centre/periphery dynamic, evades a critique of economism and reproduces itself as an inverted Eurocentrism that cannot resolve the crisis of inequality. A genuine universalism cannot emerge from incommensurable and provincialized cultures, no matter how valorized as singular or cosmopolitan; the impasse can be broken only by a national popular-democratic breakthrough instanced by national liberation struggles.

III

We are in a "new world order" in which, to quote Ellen Meiksins Wood (1998), capitalism has universalized itself, subjugating everyone to the logic of capital accumulation. Can assertions of particularities and singularities suffice to offset, sidetrack or neutralize the totalizing logic of commodification? Can a rejection of the Enlightenment paradigm of rational autonomous monads, the "Leibnizian conceit" (Harvey), free the subaltern from colonial tutelage? Given the fact that, as Saskia Sassen acutely grasped, the global cities like New York and London are "the spaces of postcolonialism and indeed contain conditions for the formation of a postcolonialist discourse" (361), how can this discourse take into account the uneven, disarticulated, and unsynchronized alignment of forces in the neocolonized, still colonized (e.g., Puerto Rico, Hawaii), and recolonized geopolitical South?

It is not exorbitant to state that today all social relations and practices, as well as the process of social transformation, labor under the imperatives of accumulation, competition, commodification and

profit-maximization. Postcolonial paradigms of hybridity and ambivalence are unable to offer frames of intelligibility that can analyze and critique the internal contradictions embedded in the neoliberal reality and ideology of the "free market". Driven by a pragmatic empiricism, postcolonialism cannot offer a frame of intelligibility for a "cognitive mapping" of all those historical trends that marked the breakdown of developmentalism, modernization theory, and other theoretical solutions to the crisis of monopoly capital since the Bolshevik Revolutions of 1917 up to the scrapping of the Breton Woods agreement and a unitary monetary system. As many have noted, postcolonialism, its logic and rhetoric, coincides suspiciously with the anarchic "free market" and the vicissitudes of finance capital on a global scale. Bound by its problematic, the postcolonial critic cannot even entertain the crucial question the Amin poses: "how can we develop the productive forces without letting commodity relations gain ground?" (1977, p 101).

There have been many explanations for this inadequacy and limitation. Amin (1998) locates it in postcolonialism's rejection of modernity, the Enlightenment narrative of emancipation and convivial democracy. The excesses of instrumental reason are ascribed to the teleology of progress instead of the logic of capitalism and its presuppositions (private property, entrepreneurship, wage labor, technological improvement, laws of the market). The conflation of the ideals of enlightenment with the telos of utilitarian capitalism and its encapsulation in the historiographic fortunes of modernity has led to a skeptical, nominalist conception of subjectivity and agency. Disavowing modernity and the principle of collective human agency-humans make their own history under determinate historical conditions, postcolonialism submits to the neoliberal bourgeois cosmos of fragmentation, individualist warfare, free-playing decentered monads, and a regime of indeterminacy and contingency. This ironic turn damages postcolonialism's claim to liberate humans from determinisms and essentialisms of all kinds.

I think the fundamental error may be traced to two sources whose historical matrix I have alluded to earlier. We have, first, the inability to conceptualize mediation or connections in a dialectical manner, substituting instead of seriality of differences whose equivalence or solidarity remains unpredicable, and second, entailed by the first premise, the incapacity to conceive of the conjunctural moment of society

as inscribed in the uneven or unequal development of the world-system. Uneven development involves the inescapable polarization of the world into peripheral and central economies, ties with the intrinsic contradiction between labor and capital and the international division of labor whose boundaries were laid by the history of European colonialism and later by finance or monopoly capital. Why theorize mediation and uneven development in a precise historicized fashion? Because our intent is a "master" and to escape the "nightmare of history and to win a measure of control over the supposedly blind and natural 'laws' of socioeconomic fatality". As Fredric Jameson suggests, historical reconstruction, "the positing of global characterizations and hypotheses, the abstraction from the 'blooming, buzzing' confusion of immediacy, was always a radical intervention in the here-and-now and the promise of resistance to its blind fatalities" (35).

From a historical-materialist perspective, the dynamic process of social reality cannot be grasped without comprehending the connections and the concrete internal relations that constitute the totality of its objective determinations. Several levels of abstraction have to be clarified among which is the relation between the knowing subject and the surrounding world (both nature and the built environment) knowledge of which is desired. Truth in this tradition comes from human practice, the intermediary between consciousness and its object; and it is human labor (knowing and making as a theorized synthesis) that unites theory and practice. As Lenin puts it, everything is mediated and connected by transitions that unite opposites, "transitions of every determination, quality, feature, side, property, into every other" so that "the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal" (132). The reciprocal interaction of various levels of formal abstractions has been elaborated by Bertell Ollman under the categories of "metamorphosis" and contradictions. These levels of abstract mediation, however, needs to be transcoded into their concrete manifestation without necessarily succumbing to the one-sided immediacy of empiricism or pragmatism. Otherwise, what Fabian (1983) calls the allochronic orientation of Eurocentric thought with its taxonomic, noncoeval representation of Others would continue to prevail.

What is required next is to confront the second-order mediations which are historically specific and transcendable, namely, the market,

money, private property, the transformation and subordination of use-value to exchange value — in short, the sources of alienation and perversion of what Meszaros calls “productive self-mediation” of individuals in social life. Alienation of the level of national struggle can only be resolved in the colonized people’s conquest of full sovereignty, “the socialization of the principal means of production” (13) and reproduction in a socialist transformation. Indeed, it is this historical phenomena of alienation and reification that post-structuralist thought hypostatizes into the nihilism of modernity, converting mediation (transition) into serial negation and occluding its prefigurative, transformative phase or aspect. Contradiction, sublation, and overdetermination do not figure as meaningful concepts in postcolonial theorizing.

Without concept of totality, however, the notion of mediation remains vacuous and useless. All determination is mediation, Roy Bhaskar reminds us in his magisterial study *Dialectic* (1993). Totality in its historical concreteness become accessible to us in the concept of uneven development, and its corollary ideas of overdetermination (or, in Samir Amin’s thought, “underdetermination”), combined development in the coexistence of various modes of production in a specific social formation, or in another framework, Wallerstein’s world-system mapping of periphery and core societies. We have come to accept as a commonplace the differential rhythm of development of societies, the uneven pace due to presence or absence of cumulative growth in the use of production techniques, labor organization, and so on, as reflected in Marx’s inquiry into Russia and Asia as mentioned earlier. It is indeed difficult to explain how the old imperial politics of Britain and France were superseded by Germany and the United States, and how West Germany and Japan have occupied dominance today.

Uneven development results from the peculiar combination of many factors which have marked societies as peripheral or central (Novack; Lowy). In many societies shaped by colonial conquest and imperial domination, uneven and combined development is discernible in the co-presence of a modern sector (usually foreign dominated or managed by the state) and a traditional sector characterized by precapitalist modes of production and ruled by a merchant capitalist and feudal/tributary ruling classes. In these peripheral formations, we find a lack of

cumulative growth, backward agriculture limited by the lack of an internal market, with the accumulated money capital diverted from whatever industrial enterprises there are into speculative activities in real estate, usury, and hoarding (Mandel 1983). This unsynchronized and asymmetrical formation, with variations throughout the postcolonial geography of post World War II ex-colonized countries, serves as the ideal habitat for "magic realism" and wild absurdist fantasies (Borges, Cortazar), as well as all those cultural expressions and practices described as hybrid, creolized, syncretic, ambivalent, multiplicitous, and so on, which postcolonial theory and criticism have labored so hard to fetishize and reify as permanent, ever-recurring, and ineluctable qualities (San Juan 1998).

IV

Prior to the disruption of the postcolonial impasse and in order to situate postcolonial difference in the Philippine context, I would like at this juncture to concretize the crisis of bourgeois metaphysics and its political implications in contemporary Filipino expression.

In general, imperialism and the anarchy of the "free market" engender incongruities, non-synchronies, the Other inscribed in liminal and interstitial space. Capital accumulation is the matrix of unequal power (Hymer 1975; Harvey 1996) between metropolis and colonies. The historical reality of uneven cultural development in a U.S. colonial and, later, neocolonial society like the Philippines is evident in the visible Americanization of schooling, mass media, literature in English, and diverse channels of mass communication (advertisements, TV and films, etc.). In my previous work (*The Philippine Temptation, History and Form*, and other books), I have described the domination of U.S. symbolic capital on literary and critical discourse since the annulment of the Spanish language and the indigenous vernaculars as viable media of expression in the public sphere at the start of U.S. colonization in 1898. The ascendancy of the hegemonic discourse of liberal utilitarianism expressed in English prevailed throughout the period of formal independence and the Cold War until the martial law period (1972-86) when an authoritarian order reinforced semi-feudal and tributary norms. Meanwhile, Philipino (now "Filipino") has become a genuine *lingua franca* with the popularity of local films and television serials, aided

by the prohibitive costs of imported Western cultural fare. Backwardness now helps hi-tech corporate business. Since the seventies, globalization has concentrated on the exploitation of local tastes and idioms for niche marketing while the impact of the Filipino diaspora in the huge flow of remittances from OCWs (Overseas Contract Workers) has accentuated the discrepancy between metropolitan wealth and neocolonial poverty, with the consumerist *habitus* made egregiously flagrant in the conspicuous consumption of domestic helpers returning from the Middle East, Europe, Hong Kong, Japan, and other places with *balikbayan* boxes. Unbeknownst to observers of this postmodern "cargo cult," coffins of these dead workers (one of them martyred in Singapore, Flor Contemplacion, achieved the status of national saint) arrive in Manila at the rate of five or six a day without too much fanfare.

In addition to the rampant pillage of the national treasury by corrupt Filipino compradors, bureaucrat-capitalists and landlords, the plunder of the economy by transnational companies has been worsened by the "structural conditionalities" imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Disaggregation of the economy has registered in the disintegration of ordinary Filipino lives due to forced migration because of lack of employments, recruiting appeals of governments and business agencies, and the dissolution of the national homeland as psychic and physical anchorage with the triumph of commodity-fetishism. I want to illustrate the phenomena of postcolonial hybridity as a symptom of uneven capitalist incursions in a story by Fanny Garcia (1994), "Arriverderci", written in 1982 at the height of the Marcos-induced export of Filipina bodies to relieve widespread immiseration and curb mounting resistance.

Symptomatic of a disaggregated and uneven socioeconomic formation are the narrative spun around the trauma of dislocation underground by over 7 million OCWs, mostly women. This unprecedented hemorrhage of labor-power, the massive export of educated women whose skills have been downgraded to quasi-slavish domestic help, issues from a diseased body politic. The marks of the disease are the impoverishment of 75% of the population, widespread corruption by the minuscule oligarchy, criminality, military/police atrocities, and the intensifying insurgency of peasants, women, workers, and indigenous communities. The network of the partriachal family and semifeudal civil society unravels when

women from all sectors (except the very rich) alienate their "free labor" in the world market. While the prime commodity remains labor-power (singularly measured here in both time and space especially for lived-in-help), OCWs find themselves frozen in a tributary status between serfhood and colonizing pettybourgeois households. Except for the carceral condition on "hospitality" women in Japan and elsewhere overseen by gangsters, most Filipinas function as indentured servants akin to those in colonial settler societies in 17th century Virginia, Australia, Jamaica, and elsewhere. But unlike those societies, the Middle East, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore and other receiving countries operate as part of the transnationalized political economy of global capitalism. These indentured cohorts are witness to the dismemberment of the emergent Filipino nation and the scattering of its traumatized elements to state-governed territories around the plane.

Garcia's ascetic representation of this highly gendered diaspora yields a diagnostic illustration of postcolonial schizophrenia. In the opening scene, Garcia describes Filipina domestics in Rome, Italy enjoying a weekend break in an excursion outside the city. One of these domestics, Nelly, meets a non-descript compatriot, Vicky (Vicenta), who slowly confides to Nelly her incredible experience of physical hardship, loneliness, and frustrated ambitions, including her background in her hometown, San Isidro. Vicky also reveals her fear that her employer might rape her, motivating her to inquire about the possibility of moving in with Nelly whose own crowded apartment cannot accommodate Vicky. Spatial confinement resembles incarceration for those who refuse the oppression of live-in contracts, the latter dramatized in Vicky's earlier experience.

After trust has been established between them, Nelly learns that Vicky has concealed the truth of her dire situation from her relatives back home. Like others, Vicky has invented a fantasy life to make her folks happy. After a short lapse of time, Nelly and her companions read a newspaper account of Vicky's suicide — according to her employer, she leaped from the fifth floor of the apartment due to a broken heart caused by her sweetheart, a Filipino seaman, who was marrying another woman. Nelly of course knows the real reason: Vicky was forced to kill herself to save her honor, to refuse bodily invasion by the Italian master. Nelly and her friends contribute to send Vicky's body back

to the Philippines. When asked how she would explain her death to the next-of-kin, everyone agrees that they could not tell the truth. Nelly resolves their predicament:

"Let's do it this way," Nelly said, "she died when the car she was in crashed."

Everyone agreed.

Nelly entered the kitchen. Holding a ballpoint pen and staring at the blank piece of paper on the table, Nelly thought that she should also remember: in San Isidro, Vicenta and Vicky were also Bising.

In the triple personas of Vicky held in the mind of Nelly, we witness the literal and figurative diaspora of the Filipino nation in which the manifold layers of experience occurring at different localities and temporalities are reconciled not in the corpse but in the act of gendered solidarity and national empathy. Without the practices of communication and cooperation among the Filipina workers, the life of the individual OCW is suspended in thrall, a helpless fragment in the nexus of commodity circulation. What I want to highlight, however, is the historicizing power of this narrative. Marx once said that capitalism conquers space with time. The urgent question is: can its victims fight back via a counterhegemonic strategy of spatial politics? Here the time of the nationalizing imagination overcomes displacement by global capital. Fantasy becomes complicit with truth when Nelly and her friends agree to shelter Vicky's family from the terror of patriarchal violence located in European terrain. We see that the routine life of the Filipino community is defined by bureaucratized space that seems to replicate the schedule back home; but the chronological itinerary is deceptive because while this passage lures us into a calm compromise with what exists, the plot of attempted rape and Vicky's suicide transpires behind the semblance of the normal and the ordinary:

Their lives in Italy resembled a clock — never changing in shape, direction or numbers.

On Sunday mornings they would gather inside the Vatican, there between the huge rocky pillars of the colonnade. ...

The Pope would appear at a window of the tall building, and would pray and speak in front of a microphone, and after his benediction, they would all join their groups upon leaving. Usually they head

for the parks. On the grass, under the trees, they will spread their packs. Some will circle around selling noodles with lemon slices, roast pork with catsup, and other viands. The picnic begins. Ilocanos congregate among themselves, so do those from Batangas, and others gather together according to language or region. Or they socialize according to profession or lack of it. After eating, they will pass the time telling stories or gambling. Betting proceeds vigorously. Toward three or four in the afternoon, the cohorts begin their departure. They head toward the churches where Filipino priests, scholars of their orders, hold mass in English or in Filipino, together with songs and sermon. The churches overflow, all Filipinos, except for one, two or three whites, who may be friends, sweethearts, wives, or partners. After the mass, the groups will again separate. Some will return to the parks, others will go to discos or moviehouses, until around they will go their separate individual ways to wherever they are staying.

This surface regularity conceals fissures and discontinuities that will only disclose themselves when the death of Vicky shatters the peace and complicates the pathos of indentured domesticity.

The most telling symptom of uneven development caused by the new international division of labor is the schizoid nature of Filipina response to serflike confinement. This response has been celebrated by postcolonial critics as the exemplary act of "sly civility", a tactic of outwitting the enemy by mimicry and ambivalent acts. We read a tabulation of this tactic in Garcia's description of Nelly's plans to tour Europe by touching base with friends and acquaintances throughout the continent, an escape from the pressure of responsibility for Vicky or accountability to anyone. Here is the cartography of Nelly's "imagined community" which generates the deterritorialized citizen of global capital. The space of recreation may relieve the pressure of alienated time, but it cannot ultimately resolve the dilemma of diaspora. Asked by her friends what's going on between her and Vicky, Nelly simply smiles and shrugs her shoulders:

More valuable for her are the questions addressed to herself. Am I to be confined to Rome alone? What corner and crossroad of Rome has she not covered already? Am I to be tied to domestic work? She didn't travel to Europe in order to let herself play a role in the

stories of killing time on Sundays, whose beginning and end she knew thoroughly. She didn't go abroad only to listen to talk anchored to "mother", "father", "child", domestic chores, grumblings and problems. Nor to pursue the life and history of a certain Vicenta.

She decided to start her travels around Europe. She already has enough savings for the trip to other countries. She'll buy a Eurail pass, it's cheaper by train. Should she begin with France, West Germany, and the Netherlands? She has friends there. Orly is in Paris, with a rented room. He went to Paris as a scholar, artist-observer, for three months, but like her he never returned to the Philippines. Now he's supporting himself by painting and photography. In Frankfurt she'll stay with Nora and her German husband, her former penpal. Angie is in Amsterdam, a cashier at a department store, with a live-in Dutch partner. Perhaps a month's journey will be enough. She'll plan visiting other lands later. She wrote her three friends.

In the above passage, we discern the contradictions immanent in Filipina agency as she negotiates her position in the locus between wage-labor under serflike conditions and the mobility promised by the "free market" of late capitalist Europe. This situation may provide us the source of scaling the postcolonial dilemma suffered by Filipinas, conceiving scale as (in Neil Smith's definition) "the geographical resolution of contradictory processes of competition and co-operation" (1993, p 99). But the chance for an escape to resolve the contradictions is foiled for the moment when Nelly and her friends learn of Vicky's death. Contrary to postcolonial alibis concerning decentered subject-positions, Garcia's narrative posits an interrogation of presumed agency: Is the charm of adventure enough to heal the trauma of dislocation and obviate the terror of rape? Are the opportunities of consuming images and experiences offered by the wages of indentured labor enough to compensate for the nullity of citizenship and the loss of intimacy and the support of family and community? Is this postcolonial interstitiality the new name of servitude under the aegis of consumerist transnationalism where physical motion transcending fixed locality becomes a surrogate for the achievement of dignity and freedom?

What is clear is the dialectical unity of opposites embedded in the geopolitical predicament of OCWs captured in Garcia's narrative (for a hermeneutics of OCW stories, see San Juan 1998b). The Filipino

diaspora here is defined by the Filipinas' social interaction and its specific differentiated geography, an interaction characterized by family/kinship linkages as well as solidarity based on recursive acts of mutual aid and struggle for survival. The political struggle over the production of scale in global capitalism is translated here in Nelly's mapping of her coordinates as she plans her tour of Europe, a translation of abstract space into places indexed by Filipino friends and acquaintances. This is not postcolonial ambivalence or hybridity because it is centered on the organic bonds of experience with oppressed compatriots; Nelly's affiliation with Vicky is tied to a web of shared stories of intimacy, dehumanization and vulnerability. The Eurocentric fabrication of Otherness is qualified if not neutralized by Nelly's collectively assigned task of communication with Vicky's family, a task that prefigures and recuperates even if only in symbolic terms the interrupted struggles for national autonomy and sovereignty on the face of disintegration by transnational corporate aggression.

Postcolonial disjunctures are reproduced by acts of revolt and sustained resistance. Such acts constitute a bad example for metropolitan citizen subjects of industrialized democracies. Racism still prevents them from uniting with their victims. While it would be exorbitant to claim that global capitalism has been dealt a blow by Filipina agencies of coping and life-maintenance, I would suggest here that this mode of representation, which I would categorize as a type of allegorical realism common to progressive Filipino writers and artists, enables us to grasp the totalizing virtue of Filipino nationalism as it inhabits diasporic subjects. Perhaps this virtue manifests itself only as a potential reservoir of energies that can be mobilized in crisis situations; still, the cultural and ideological resistance of neocolonized Filipinos overseas testify to its immanent presence in that Lenin called "the weak links" of the imperialist chain around the planet, not only in the peripheral dependencies but also in the margins now transposed to the centers of empire.

V

In my view, this historical conjuncture of uneven and combined development can only be grasped by a dialectical assessment of imperialism such as those propounded by Gramsci, C.L.R. James, Walter

Rodney, Amílcar Cabral, and others in the Marxist-Leninist tradition. It was Lenin who remedied the classical limitation of the Second International and the social democratic parties by integrating in his idea of world revolution the revolt of the industrial working class in Europe with the mass uprisings of small colonized nations, as well as peasant revolts against landowners. Lenin's post-1914 writings — the Hegel Notebooks, the article "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination," etc. — theorized how the "particular" of national liberation movements can, under certain conditions, become the road to the universal of socialism. In this discourse, mediation assumes the form of contradiction between oppressed peoples in the colonies and oppressor nations. As Kevin Anderson argues, "Lenin's theory of imperialism has become dialectical in the sense of pointing not only to the economic side of imperialism but also to a new revolutionary subject arising from within global imperialism: national liberation movements" (1995, p. 142). Unless we can improve on Lenin's theory of national liberation with its processual or dialectical materialist method, we will only be indulging in postcolonial verbal magic and vertiginous tropology that mimicks Bhabha, Appadurai, and their epigones.

As for the concrete translation of the Leninist tradition into situated historical praxis, I can only allude to the brilliant and enduring example of Amílcar Cabral and his achievement. In what way does Cabral supersede the mechanical version of decolonization as a valorization of interstitiality, syncretism, and transculturation?

A few key features of Cabral's thought need to be underscored. Cabral's theory of national revolution is a creative application of Marxism as a dialectical theory of action in which history generates the unforeseen within the parameters of what objectively exists. Cabral understood the Marxist insight that "the process of history seeks itself and proves itself in praxis" (Lefebvre, p. 162). He theorized national liberation in his concrete milieu (the Portuguese colonies of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde islands) through the paradigm of interacting modes of production in history. Cabral insisted on the centrality of the level of productive forces as the "true and permanent driving power of history" (*Return*, p. 42). Imperialist rule deprived the colonized people of agency, the vocation of shaping their own history. Since imperialist domination negated "the historical process of the dominated people by means of

violently usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces the goal of decolonization is "the liberation of the process of development of national productive forces" (43). The struggle for national liberation is not simply a cultural fact, but also a cultural factor generating new forms and content in the process ("The Role of Culture", p 211).

For Cabral, culture is the salient or key constituent of the productive forces. Culture becomes the decisive element in grasping the dialectic of subjective and objective forces, the level of productive forces and the production relations, as well as the uneven terrain of class struggles: "Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within society, as well as among different societies" (41). But Cabral urges a concrete differentiation of tendencies and possibilities: "Nor must we forget that culture, both as a cause and an effect of history, includes essential and secondary elements, strengths and weaknesses, merits and defects, positive and negative aspects, factors both for progress and stagnation or regression, contradictions, conflicts...Culture develops unevenly at the level of a continent, a "race", even a community" ("The Role of Culture", pp 210, 212). If liberation is an act of culture, it is also a struggle to shape a richer culture that is simultaneously "popular, national, scientific and universal" (212).

Framed within the problematic of a non-linear narrative, Cabral conceives of national liberation as a wide-ranging transformation of the combined political, economic and cultural institutions and practices of the colonized society. It is not narrowly culturalist or merely superstructural because culture refers to the "dynamic synthesis of the material and spiritual historical reality of a society". In a broad sense, it is the recovery of specific African forms of subjectivity, a "regaining of the historical personality of the people, its return to history through the destruction of imperialist domination". This recovery is staged as a popular cultural renaissance with the party as the chief pedagogical agency wielding the "weapon of theory", the organized political expression of a mass, national-popular culture in the making. This renaissance occurred in the praxis of the liberated zones controlled by the PAIGC.

(African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) where the culture-changing processes of criticism and self-criticism, democratic discussion, teaching and learning from the participants, and so on were encouraged and institutionalized. This will recall Marx's dialectical thesis of an alternative to unilinear evolutionism of the Russian village commune : if the subjective force of the peasantry acquires consciousness and organized identity, the objective situation can be transformed in a liberatory direction (Hudis). In the context of the African Gold Coast, C.L.R. James formulated this Marxian thesis as the objective process of the "movement of a people finding themselves and creating a new social order", the basis of unity being the actual conditions in which the people live (351).

Cabral was called by his people *Fundador da Nacionalidade*, Founder of the Nationality, not Founder of the Nation. According to Basil Davidson, this is because "the nation was and is collectivity and necessarily founds itself, but [Cabral was the] founder of the process whereby this collectivity could (and does) identify itself and continue to build its post-colonial culture." ("On Revolutionary Nationalism", p 39.) Cabral also believed that "the dialectical nature of identity lies in the fact that it both *identifies and distinguishes*." ("The Role", 208.) Seizing the strategic initiative, Cabral exhorted his comrades and fighters to engage in a double and totalizing task cognizant of the uneven cultural and ideological strata of the geopolitical terrain:

Every responsible worker and very militant of our Party, every element of the population in our land in Guinea and Cape Verde, should be aware that our struggle is not only waged on the political level and on the military level. Our struggle — our resistance — must be waged on all levels of the life of our people. We must destroy everything the enemy can use to continue their domination over our people, but at the same time we must be able to construct everything that is needed to create a new life in our land (quoted in Cohen, p. 44).

Cabral combine national and social elements into an insurrectionary movement in which the partisan unit, no longer a local entity but a "body of permanent and mobile cadres around whom the local force is formed" (Hosbawn, 166), became the germ of the "new life", the embryonic nationality becoming the nation.

Developing certain themes in Fanon, Cabral's Marxism is unique in concentrating on the potential nation as "a form of revolutionary collective subjectivity" mediating actual classes, sectors and groups into a "nation-for-itself" that can reclaim the "inalienable right of every people to have their own history" based on its right to control "the process of development of national productive forces". Cabral located the roots of this subjectivity in the cultural resistance of the masses which was "protracted and multiple", "only possible because by preserving their culture and their identity the mass retain consciousness of their individual and collective dignity despite the vexations, humiliations and cruelties they are exposed to." ("The Role", p 209). It is that notion of integral "dignity" that lies at the center of Cabral's "weapon of theory". As Timothy Luke acutely remarked, Cabral valued the "emancipatory forms of collective subjectivity" in the colonized subjects and so promoted "the politically organised and scientifically rationalized *reconstitution* of the traditional African peoples' history-making and culture-building capacities" (191). Cabral urged his activists: "I am asking you to accomplish things on your own initiative because everybody must participate in the struggle" (quoted in Chaliand, p 68). Cabral's originality thus lies in his recognizing that the nation-in-itself immanent in the daily lives of the African people can be transformed into a nation-for-itself, this latter concept denoting the peoples' exercise of their historical right of self-determination through the mediation of the national liberation movement, with the PAIGC as an educational organizing force that seeks to articulate the national-popular will.

Contrary to postcolonial speculation, Cabral's project is the making of a nation in the course of the anti-imperialist struggle. Comprised of numerous ethnic groups living apart, highly fragmented with over a dozen languages, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde did not fulfill the orthodox qualifications of a nation laid down by Stalin: "a stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in the common culture" (68). Cabral's exceptional contribution consists in articulating the nation-in-process (of transition from potentiality to actuality) in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. The project of the party he founded the PAIGC, aimed to generate national awareness by mass mobilization of the peasants in conjunction with the petty bourgeoisie,

the embryonic proletariat, and the declassed youth. Through skillful organization and painstaking ideological education, the PAIGC converted the cultural resistance of the tribal villages into a dynamic and formidable force capable of defeating a technologically sophisticated enemy.

Cabral began from the paradoxical phenomenon of the indigenous petty bourgeoisie beginning to acquire a consciousness of the totality by comparison of the various parts of colonized society. He exhorted the petty bourgeoisie to commit class suicide in order to coalesce with the peasantry (the workers constituted a tiny minority; a national bourgeoisie did not exist); but Cabral had no illusions that such alliances would spontaneously firm up in a postcolonial environment. He stated before his assassination on 20 January 1973: "You know who is capable of taking control of the state apparatus after independence.... The African petty bourgeoisie has to be the inheritor of state power, although I wish I could be wrong. The moment national liberation comes and the petty bourgeoisie takes power we enter, or rather return, to history and the internal contradictions break out again" (quoted Davidson, *The Liberation*, p. 134). Cabral's insight warns us of the dangers of reifying postcolonial culture as an interstitial, ambiguous space of contestation devoid of any outside from which critique can be formulated. Contradictions persist even in transitory class alliances (the famous unity of opposites in Lenin's discourse), hence the need to calculate the stages of the struggle which demand strategic mutations and tactical alterations, while keeping in mind a constant theme: "the masses keep intact the sense of their individual and collective dignity" (*Return*, p. 69). The axiom of uneven and combined development rules out such postcolonial assumptions of contingent heterogeneity and incommensurable disparities of individuals that ignore mass native cultural resistance. Cabral upheld the anti-postcolonial belief of the "supremacy of social life over individual life", of "society as a higher form of life" ("The Role of Culture", p. 208), which in effect contradicts the neoKantian attribution of moral and rational agency to bourgeois individuals, a criterion that "postpositivist realists" (Mohanty) and assorted disciples of Bhabha and Spivak espouse.

Notwithstanding the resurgence of armed anti-imperialist insurgency in "their world" neocolonies like Colombia, the Philippines, Mexico

(Chiapas), the moment of Cabral might be deemed irretrievably remote now from our present disputes. However, the formerly subjugated peoples of color grudgingly acknowledged by Western humanism (following Kant's axiom of rational autonomy and Adam Smith's notion of the "free market") cannot be simply pacified by reforming capitalism's international division of labor. The postcolonial cult of the Leibnizian conceit (Harvey), in which alterity and marginality automatically acquire subversive entitlement, has carried out the containment of Marxist ideas and ideals of national liberation by an aestheticizing maneuver analogous to what Neil Larsen discerned in cultural studies: "a subtle transfer of emancipatory aims from the process of objective social transformation go the properly 'cultural' task of intervention in the 'subject'-forming play of discourse(s)" (*Reading*, p 201). But as long as a capitalism produces uneven and polarizing trends in all social formations, there will always exist residual and emergent agencies challenging the reign of "the law of value" and postmodern barbarism (Amin, *Spectres*).

We cannot of course return wholesale to the classic period of national liberation struggles indexed by the names of Nkrumah, Cabral, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevarra, Fanon, and others. My purpose in bringing up Cabral is simply to refute the argument that historical materialist thinking is useless in grasping the complexity of colonialism and its aftermath. Would shifting our emphasis then on studying the subaltern mind remedy the inadequacies and limitations of postcolonial theory? I might interpolate here the view of two Australian scholar, Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, who believe that the limits of the postcolonial/diasporic trajectory can be made up by the voices of the indigenous and the subaltern within the context of the "relativization of all discursive self/other positionings within the Anglophone cultural studies community" (386). This intervention in the site of textual-discursive representation is salutary, but the problem of articulating a counter-hegemonic strategy focusing on the "weak links" (where the IMF/World Bank's "structural conditionalities" continue to wreak havoc) remains on the agenda.

Finally, I want to situate postcolonialism as a symptomatic recuperation of finance capital, at best the imaginary resolution of contradictions between exploited South and exploiting North, within the

altered geopolitical alignments of the world-system.

The "third world" was a viable conceptualization of the nationalist bourgeois struggles that led to the independence of India, Ghana, the Philippines, Egypt, Indonesia and other nation-states after World War II. The classic postcolonial states created the Bandung coalition of non-aligned states which gave a semblance of unity to the "third world". However, United States hegemony during the Cold War continued until the challenge in Vietnam, Cuba, and elsewhere. The last expression of "third world" solidarity, the demand for a "New International Economic Order" staged in the United Nations, came in the wake of the oil crisis of 1973; but the OPEC nations, with their political liabilities, could not lead the "third world" of poor, dependent nations against U.S. hegemony. Notwithstanding the debacle in Vietnam and the series of armed interventions in the Caribbean and elsewhere, U.S. world supremacy was maintained throughout the late seventies and eighties by economic force. This mode of winning consent from the "third world" used monetarist policies that caused lower export earnings and high interest rates, reducing these polities to dependencies of the IMF/WB and foreign financial consortia. The defeat of a "third world" bloc in 1982 allowed the U.S.-led Western bloc to exploit "international civil society" into a campaign against global Keynesianism. From 1984 to the nineties, however, global Reaganomics, the instability of the financial markets, the fall of the dollar, worsening U.S. deficit, etc. posed serious problems to the U.S. maintenance of hegemony over the Western bloc. Despite the success, and somewhat precipitous collapse, of the Asian Newly-Industrializing Countries, the "third world" as an independent actor, with its own singular interests and aspirations, has virtually disappeared from the world scene. What compensates for this disappearance is postcolonial theory and criticism whose provenance owes much to finance capital than is heretofore acknowledged or understood, a disappearance masked by the carnivalesque regime of simulacra and simulations that, despite its current hegemony, fails to repress, I daresay, the labor of the "old mole" burrowing underground. Wherever neocolonialism (Woddis) prevails, the ideals and practice of national liberation will continue to thrive.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, Aijaz. 1995. "Postcolonialism: What's in a Name : In *Late Imperial Culture*. Eds. Roman de la Campa, E. Ann Kaplan, and Micheal Sprinker. London: Verso.
- Ahmad, Equba. 1971. "Revolutionary Warfare and Counterinsurgency." In *National Liberation*. Eds. Norman Miller and Roderick Aya. New York: The Free Press.
- Amin, Samir. 1977. *Imperialism and Unequal Development*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- . *Eurocentrism*. 1989. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- . 1994. *Re-Reading the Postwar Period*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- . 1998. *Spectres of Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Anderson, Kevin. 1995. *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*. Urbana, Ill : University of Illinois Press.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge.
- Bhaskar Roy. 1993. *Dialectic : The Pulse of Freedom*. London: Verso.
- Cabral, Amilcar. 1973. *Return to the Source : Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Cabral, Amilcar 1979. "The Role of Culture in the Liberation Struggle." In *Communication and Class Struggle*. Volume 1: *Capitalism, Imperialism*. New York: International General.
- Callinicos, Alex. 1989. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. New York: St. Martins Press.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 1995. "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of history." In *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. New York: Routledge.
- Chaliand, Gerard. 1969. *Armed Struggle in Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Cohen, Sylvester. 1998. "Amilcar Cabral: An Extraction from the Literature." *Monthly Review* (December): 39-47.
- Davidson, Basil. 1969. *The Liberation of Guine*. New York: Penguin Books.
- . 1986. "On revolutionary nationalism : the legacy of Cabral." *Race and Class* xxvii, 3: 21-45.
- Denis, Manuel Maldona. 1982 "National Liberation: Categorical Imperative for the Peoples of Our America." *Tricontinental* 82: 8-15.
- Dews, Peter. 1995. *Logics of Disintegration*. London: Verso.
- Dillik, Arif. 1997. *The Postcolonial Aura*. Boulder, CO: West View Press.

- El Saadawi, Nawal. 1997. *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader*. London: Zed Books.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gandhi, Leela. 1998. *Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Habermas, Jurgen. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Harvey, David. 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. London: Blackwell.
- Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 1984. "Learning the Dialectics of Marxism." In *Rethinking Marx*. Eds. Sakari Hanninen and Leena Paldan. New York: International General.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. 1973. *Revolutions*. New York: New American Library.
- Hudis, Peter. 1983. *Marx and the Third World*. Detroit, MI: News and Letters Committees.
- James, C.L.R. 1992. *The CLR James Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1998. *The Cultural Turn*. London: verso.
- Larsen, Neil. 1995 *Reading North by South*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press.
- Larsen, Neil 1999. "Determination : Postcolonialism, Poststructuralism and the problem of Ideology." *The Pre-Occupation of Post-Colonial Studies*. Eds. Kalpana Seshadri Crooks and Fawzia Afsal-Khan. Duke: Duke University Press.
- Lazarus, Neil. 1991. "Doubting the New World Order: Marxism, Realism, and the Claims of Postmodernist Social Theory." *Differences* 3.3: 94-138.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1969. *The Sociology of Marx*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Lenin, Vladimir. 1963. "The Unity and Conflict of Opposites." *Reader in Marxist Philosophy*. Eds. Howard Selsam and Harry Martel. New York: International Publishers.
- Levine, Norman 1978. "Dialectical Materialism and the Mir." In *Marx: Sociology / Social Change / Capitalism*. Ed. Donald McQuarrie. New York: Quartet Books.
- Lichtheim, George. 1967. *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Loomba, Ania. 1998. *Colonialis/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Lowy, Michael. 1981. *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*. London: New Left Books.

- Luke, Timothy W. 1990. *Social Theory and Modernity*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- McLennan, Gregor. 1981. *Marxism and the Methodologies of History*. London: Verso.
- Mandel, Earnest. 1983. "Uneven Development." In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* Ed. Tom Bottomore. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Mariategui, Jose Carlos. 1996. *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of Jose Carlos Mariategui*. Ed. Micheal Pearlman. New Jersey: Humanities Press.
- Marx, Andrew. 1980. "Amilcar Cabral and Two Problems of the Guinean Revolution". *Forward Motion*: 41-46.
- Marx, Karl. 1982. "Pathways of Social Development: A Brief Against Suprahistorical Theory". In *Introduction to the Sociology of 'Developing Societies'*. Eds. Hamza Alavi and Theodor Shanin. New York and London: Monthly Review Press: 109-11.
- . 1965. *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. Introduction by Eric J. Hobsbawm. New York: International Publishers.
- and Friedrich Engels. 1959. *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*. New York: Doubleday and Co.
- Meszaros, Istvan. 1983. "Colonial Legacies, Multicultural Futures: Relativism, Objectivity, and the Challenge of Otherness." *PMLA* 110.1 (January 1995): 108-118.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart. 1997. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso.
- Novack, George. 1966. *Uneven and Combined Development in History*. New York: Merit Publishers.
- Ollman, Bertell. 1993. *Dialectical Investigations*. New York: Routledge.
- Patterson, Thomas C. 1997. *Inventing Western Civilization*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- San Juan, E. 1998. *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*. New York: St. Martins Press.
- Schulze-Engler, Frank. 1998. "The Politics of Postcolonial Theory". In *Postcolonial Theory and the Emergence of a Global Society*. Eds. Gordon Collier, Dieter Riemenschneider and Frank Schulze-Engler. Frankfurt am Main : ACOLIT.
- Shohat, Ella. 1991. "Notes on the Post-Colonial." *Social Text*: 99-112.
- Stalin, Joseph. 1970. "Marxism and the National Question." In *Selections from Lenin and J V Stalin on National Colonial Question*. Calcutta: Calcutta Book House.

- Stratton, Jon and Ien Ang. 1996. "On the impossibility of a global cultural studies : 'British Cultural Studies in an 'international' frame." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. New York: Routledge.
- Strummer, Peter. 1998. "Some Pragma-Theoretical Consideration." In *Postcolonial Theory and the Emergence of a Global Society*. Eds. Gordon Collier et al. Frankfurt am Main: ACOLIT.
- Turner, Bryan S. 1983. "Asiatic Society". In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Ed. Tom Bottomore. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Woddis, Jack. 1972. *Introduction to Neo-Colonialism*. New York: International Publishers.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 1998. "Modernity, Postmodernity or Capitalism?" In *Postcolonial Theory and the Emergence of a Global Society*, Supra.
- Young, Robert. 1998. "Ideologies of the Postcolonial," *Interventions* 1.1.1-9.

THE NATIONALIST CONSTRUCTION OF FEMININITY: SARAT CHANDRA'S *SRIKANTA*

Nationalist thought in India articulated itself by appropriating the orientalist construct of a glorious Hindu past to create an alternate arena from where it could offer resistance to colonial politics in the form of claims to cultural superiority. "Colonial subjection forced an exposure to a radically new civilization as a necessarily, axiomatically superior one. This induced within the intelligentsia, a simultaneous attraction to it and a need to escape from it to one's own roots. These roots, however, have (*sic*. had) become irrevocably tarnished by comparisons, doubts, criticism and questioning induced by that exposure to a more successful cultural order. A new acute consciousness of the inexorable march of history with which India had never kept in step, of teleological time with a westernized notion of progress as its goal, produced intolerable anxieties and violent desire to break out of its iron frame by a return to the past, to one's mother, a reversion to the womb, to a state of innocence, of pleasure where the infant is as yet undifferentiated from the mother, as yet unaware of its own distinct self."¹ Present-day scholarships on the nationalist movement in nineteenth century Bengal reveal the peculiar tensions caused by the intersection and often symbiotic operation of the discourses of tradition and modernity. Although tradition was upheld, it also became necessary for the early nationalists to revise and modernize it in order to incorporate the severe criticism directed at traditional Hindu practices from western quarters (and later from the English-educated natives). Criticism especially regarding the subjection of women to an endless tyranny of customs 'sanctioned' by scriptural authority. The site of both the colonial and the nationalist gaze was the woman. For the colonizers, who justified their presence as an educative mission to civilize the 'barbaric' Indians,

the 'scripturally enforced oppression' of the Hindu woman not only strengthened their belief in their own cultural superiority over their subjects, but also provided a moral legitimation for intervention in native social and cultural practices.² A critic lashed out that,

a state of dependence more strict and humiliating than that which is ordered the weaker sex. ...Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which Hindus entertain for for their women.... They are held in extreme degradation, excluded from the sacred books, deprived of education (of a share) in the paternal property.... That remarkable barbarity, the wife held unworthy to eat with her husband, is prevalent in Hindustan.³

This was the line of argument of the anglicists, the utilitarians and the evangelicals. The orientalist on the other hand, accepting the degenerate condition of contemporary Hindu women saw it as a corollary of the Muslim invasion and quoted the examples of Gargi, Maitreyi, Lilavati and others as representatives of the superior status of women in ancient Hindu civilization.

Apart from the reforms being legislated to abolish such practices as "suttee", Kulin polygamy and child marriage, and to legalize widow remarriage, advocated by the early nationalists, initiative was also taken to educate girls. However, the curricula of contemporary women's education show that emphasis was laid on 'feminine' subjects such as needle work and embroidery, literature and history while subjects such as mathematics, logic and the natural sciences were kept beyond their purview. Education was oriented towards easing the process of domestic socialization instead of threatening the social configuration by creating potential competitors for the job market (though there did emerge professional women such as Kadambari Ganguly and Chandramukhi Bose). As late as 1870, the 'radical' Keshab Chandra Sen outlined the goal of female education as, 'an education calculated to make Indian women good wives, mothers, sisters and daughters'.⁴ Thus, the 'new' notion of femininity actually only regenerated the traditional model of the self effacing, submissive woman. The agenda for women's education seems perfectly in tune with Michel Foucault's statement that, a 'system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the power and

knowledge they carry'.⁵ Michael Madhusudan Dutta in 1842, in "An essay" on the importance of educating Hindu females argued his point as follows:

Many people have been unable to give up their belief in the existence of Ghosts, notwithstanding the strong remonstrances of Reason, and the evidence of Science, because the impressions left on the mind by the idle tales heard or recited in the nursery could not be effaced! It is needless to dwell upon the numerous benefits a child may derive from *an educated nurse*. In a country like India where nurseship (if I may so call the office of a nurse) generally devolves on the mother, the importance of educating the female ... is very great: for unless they are enlightened they spread the infection of their ignorance in the minds of those they bring up. Extensive dissemination of knowledge amongst women is the surest way that leads a nation to civilization and refinement.⁶ (Emphasis added.)

Fathers were now eager to educate their daughters, not for their intellectual improvement but to meet the new demands of the matrimonial market.⁷ That this model was internalized by the women themselves is evident from their writings which upheld the benefits of an education conducive to the development of 'useful' virtues, compatible with the familial universe (oft quoted examples are the writings of Radharani Lahiri and Kundamala Devi).⁸ But for women, radicalism and transgression lay in the very act and practice of reading, more than in the content of their works. Hence the reformist-educationists were at pains to limit reading that they had opened up.

Nationalist ideology did not challenge patriarchy but reworked it with a different set of social co-ordinates to adapt to a changed cultural climate. Modernization implied a disruption in the idiom of historical continuity of the discourses on the Hindu family. The agenda of cultural transformation, formulated by the native Hindu upper-caste, upper-and middle-class male intelligentsia, aimed at creating an enlightened domesticity without altering its 'sacred' Indian (read Hindu) character and the prevailing power-equation. The construction of ideal femininity was worked out in conjunction with the myths of Sita, Sati, and Savitri, and through an interarticulation with Hindu religious discourses:

essentialized the good woman as being chaste, devoted and silent in suffering. Confined to the domestic cocoon, the body of the pure woman — the 'sati nari', 'ruled by the *Sastras*', was considered, the repository of 'authentic' Indian values (whatever those may be). This body represented the only space yet unpolluted by colonial forces — and thus resolved the nationalist dilemma of negotiating between the twin claims of tradition and modernity,

She was transformed into a figure who could be expressive of the nostalgia for a mythical organic society, a vantage point from which the society now threatened from all sides would be surveyed and at the same time be an agent of purification and rejuvenation, she signified both order and progress — progress being understood as an extension and enrichment of pre-colonial order.⁹

The private sphere had more or less retained its original identity (the 'untarnished' nature of this domain was itself a construct, anyway), whereas, the public sphere had been subjected to rapid changes as a result of the colonial encounter. The discourse of tradition ruled one, the discourse of reform the other. And though changes were effected in the domestic sphere, the modern reformers seeking the path of least resistance always pleaded the desirability of these reforms in the rhetoric of tradition. Professor Tanika Sarkar, in her study of Hindu conjugality and nationalism in late nineteenth century Bengal, develops the same point. Against the

fundamental and all encompassing loss of selfhood the only sphere of autonomy, of free will, was located within the Hindu family, to be more precise with the Hindu woman, her position within an authentic Hindu marriage system and the ritual surrounding the deployment of her body. The forces on this arena led to its problematization and while there was a keenly felt need to define it as a pure desirable state, there was also a thorough examination of every aspect of the problem. For the first time since Manu perhaps, and in a very different sense from him, family life and womanhood directly and explicitly emerged as a central area of problematization.¹⁰

By interpellating women as the bearer of an 'essential' Indian identity the nationalists engaged in a process of myth-making whereby chastity

attained the status of THE transcendental signifier of womanly virtues.¹¹ The representation of women in reformist-nationalist discourse shows however, that she was an empty signifier endowed with whatever meaning that men, the constituting agents, assigned to her. This discourse was more or less hegemonic, except in a few instances where the development of an incipient feminist consciousness forced women to resist it. The model maintained its sway during the nationalist era and holds good even today. It is on this construct that much of popular Indian fiction and celluloid is based.

Literature provided the necessary cultural validation to the model. Through a wide dissemination of educative literature and manuals on domestic science and rules of conduct, contemporary literary practices fashioned the *bhadramahila*, to suit the new tastes of the English educated westernized bhadralok. Not only was the notion of 'propriety' being re-defined, but so was femininity in the altered context. The general trend of literature was didactic. The realm of feminine desire was being defined by male literary artists. As Spivak remarks, it was 'a constructed ... narrative of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being, thus woman's being good, thus the good woman's desire, thus woman's desire'.¹²

Susilar Upakhyan by Madhusudan Mukhopadhyaya, which won the first prize at the literary competition organized by the "Bangabhasanubadak Samaj", tried to resolve, in the figure of Sushila, the tension between the demands of the old and new forms of patriarchy. The heroine, a product of a refracted modernity, defined for the benefit of her readers the whole space of feminine activity, the home where each woman had to identify her co-ordinates. The prolific development of didactic literature was supplemented by the traditional Hindu ritual practices or the *vratas*. Like the literary models, these rituals also interiorized the mythic legends of virtuous women — these stories in fact had almost become a part of the female baby-food.

However, the initial popularity of the Susilas and Santidayinis soon began to wane.¹³ One of the first deviations from this literary tradition was Michael Madhusudan Dutta's *Virangana Kavya* (1862). Significantly dedicated to Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar, this compendium of twelve imaginary letters written by women characters from Sanskrit literature,

added an almost feminine voice into the patriarchal discourse in the free articulation of female desire and defiance, in place of silent 'wifely' submission.

The novelistic universe of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya is crowded with women who resist the normative models prescribed by the nationalists, but are finally contained within the hegemonic discourse (which Bankim as a firm believer in 'order and progress' naturally privileges) after a mild threat to the status quo. Although he has been considered extremely progressive because, in his fiction, he depicted widow remarriage and thus 'bestowed' on them the 'privilege' to love again, the familial space of his fiction was actually unable to accommodate them. They are seen, more or less, as disruptive forces and are implicitly pushed into literal non-existence. The narrative conclusion often contradicts the dominant narrative characterization and to a certain point defeats its own message. Infact, he seems to have been against widow remarriage as a reformist measure. Without going into the deep psychological complexities of Tagore's characters, I would like to add a word about the remarkable persona of Kumudini (in *Yogayog*). She not only exposed the pleasant myth of loving surrender in a non-consensual marriage and made transparent the coercive patriarchal nature of the Hindu household, but had gone even further and rejected maternity. Kumudini promises to return to her brother someday, leaving her affinal home, because, "there are certain things that cannot be compromised even for a son".¹⁴ But having proceeded thus far Tagore stopped, and when he resumed the story there was strangely no mention of her.

Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya reworked Bankim's model by locating in the Indian home and on the body of women, the essential markers of sacredness. By the time he entered the literary scene of Bengal, the nationalist model had been well established. And though Saratchandra's popularity rests on his reassertion of the nationalist construct in his fiction, it is often mistakenly perceived that he privileged this brand of femininity as the only legitimate one. Although instances might be rare — he did engage in iconoclasm too.

In the following section, I have discussed his problematic construction of femininity in the novel *Srikanta*. He interrogated the validity of

traditional practices, the spiritual charlatantry surrounding the Hindu widow and the patriarchal double-standards, yet simultaneously created a feminine mystique of the weak and dependent woman.

II

Written in an autobiographical mode which enhances the impression of truthfulness, the novel *Srikanta* plays out the tension between the discourses of tradition and of reform through the figures of the several remarkable women whom *Srikanta* meets during his wanderings. And although his answer to the "women's question" is often very conservative, the text achieves its poly-phonicity by disprivileging any single construct. The novel attempts to negotiate between opposing ideologies: the dominant ideology of colonialism articulates with the emergent nationalist ideology. And recapitulating from above, one notes that initially the two had not been oppositional. In the nationalist discourse a high premium had been placed on chastity, and consequently the 'fallen' woman had been pushed to the margins. It was in that peripheral zone, on sexually abused women, that Saratchandra often located his constellation of 'good' women. However, he still kept the domestic space out of their reach though all of them even while existing beyond the pale of 'sacred domesticity', tenaciously abide by its normative codes. Thus, Rajlakshmi pines away for Srikanta, Savitri must relinquish Satish, and Rama sacrifice her love for Ramesh. The threats that these women pose are on the whole contained within the male hegemonic discourse. Foucault's observation comes in useful in this context:

Discursive practices are characterized by 'a delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories' ('Language, Counter-Memory, Practice', p. 199). Their effect is to make it virtually impossible to think outside these. To think outside them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason. It is in this way that we can see how discursive rules are linked to the exercise of power; how the forms of discourses are both constituted by, and ensure the reproduction of the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion and domination. 'In every society', Foucault writes, 'the production of discourse is controlled,

organized, redistributed, by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its materiality.’¹⁵

Srikanta’s Annada-didi unquestioningly accepts the societal expectation structure and is rendered a paradigmatic figure in his eyes. After his encounter with her, all other women are measured as aberrations from this ‘ideal.’ Srikanta recreates the first moment of his vision of the ‘divine’ Annanda in almost poetical rhetoric; it is for him a sacred moment, the moment of epiphany:

Turning my head I saw Indra’s didi. There is an expression ‘fire under the cover of ashes’, that was my first thought as I saw her. She looked as if she had just risen from her seat of penance after age-long austerities. Under her left arm was a bundle of dry twigs and in her right hand was a basket, shaped like a flower basket, with some vegetables in it. (53)¹⁶

Through the rest of the conversation between Indra and Annada, Srikanta sits silent, spellbound. From the very first day of his meeting perhaps there grows in him the masculine desire of an adolescent boy to protect Annada. A sense of her utter helplessness in the face of the cruelty she had to bear from her husband also adds a special ‘feminine’ color to her make-up. Annada’s letter to Srikanta however makes it very clear that she had not really suffered cheerfully as Srikanta would like to believe:

My elder sister had lost her husband and was living with us. My husband killed her and disappeared. ...*I cannot express all that I suffered, all my poignant shame. Still your Didi endured it all through the pain, The fire of indignity, which my husband had kindled for me, has not yet abated after all these years.* ...Seven years afterwards, I saw him again. He was playing to a snake before our house. ...Nobody else could recognize him, but I did: he could not deceive me. *He said that he braved the danger of recognition for my sake alone. But that was a lie.* Yet one dark night when all were asleep, I opened the backdoor and left my father’s house for the sake of my husband. Everyone heard and everyone believed that Annada had run away to a life of ignominy and shame. *I shall have to bear the burden of this*

throughout my life, but there is no help for it. (73) (Emphases added.)

From the passage it seems unlikely that Annada had any strong attachment towards her husband; in fact, a certain note of regret is apparent. Love being absent, did she respect him? No. And yet, she leaves home for him, takes care of him, and spends her life with him. She seems obsessed with the 'idea', and rhetoric of fidelity. The revelation of the truth of her husband's misdeeds, which is a device that Sarat Chandra uses for the glorification of his heroine, is in itself a betrayal on her part. It is ironical that though this device raises her to the status of a goddess in the eyes of Srikanta, it simultaneously reveals her unhappiness with this decision. But especially important is Srikanta's reaction to the letter:

Whenever I think of her and *bow down my head to her blessed memory*, I cannot help saying, 'what strange judgement is thine. O God! I can see that in this land (of Sati-Savitri in the original), famous for ideal wives *sufferings* have often heightened the glory of *wifely constancy* and *love* (Sati is mentioned here in the original). I can also see that it is Thy Will that *the sorrows of all such wives become transmuted into the eternal halo which makes their memory a constant inspiration to all women*. But why didst thou ordain such an ironical destiny for my Didi? Why should she, who had been faithful to her husband till his death, have her pure head branded with the taint of infidelity? Why should she be banished from society? What did she not *sacrifice* — her caste, her faith, society, honour her all? She whose seat is as high as that of Sita or Savitri (Sati) — what did her parents and relatives, her friends and foes, think her to be? A faithless wife and an abandoned woman.... If you can remember her whom you have regarded as a sinful woman and take her name once every morning, it will redeem you from your many sins. (75-76) (Emphases added.)

The above passage bears several markers of the Indian ideal of wifehood. Not only does it engage in the process of the apotheosis of Annada by evoking the famous mythical trio, but Srikanta's rhetoric defines for his readers the ultimate desirable qualities of the 'good wife' — suffering, constancy, sacrifice. He goes so far as to consider them, the sole directive

principles of a woman's life. Yet there is a problematization which lies outside Srikanta's reaction. What he does not see, or refuses to acknowledge, is that Annada was not forced into a miserable situation. She had opted for it, for a "life of ignominy and shame". She was socially conditioned into a dangerous ideology — certainly! but it is *she* who chose to follow it to this extreme. Her husband could have murdered her, just as he did her sister; but Annada takes the risk. Srikanta seems intent on cutting down her agential role by readucing her to a victim of cultural determinism; but that, to my mind is myopic — a refusal to accept the totality of her character. However hard Srikanta tries, it is difficult to label Annada, a conformist. Anyway, the incident jars him, and is the second major cause of rupture in Srikanta's ideal boyhood. The conservative approach that he has on the "women's question" is interesting because he himself holds a somewhat marginal position in society. However, it might not be a good idea to conflate this with the author's take on the issue, at least at this point, since so much irony functions at the expense of Srikanta himself.

The novel, however, is not monologic; the second part (published in 1918) engages in contradicting and questioning this very model of womanhood. The first two parts are complementary in nature, they shape the trajectory of the development and the destruction of the idea of *satitva*. But between the publication of the first and the second part, another very important novel of Saratchandra had already been published — *Charitrahin* (1917). The novel, having shown a woman in rebellion punishes her with insanity. Kiranmoyee the beautiful and intellectually brilliant woman must settle accounts with patriarchal norms by becoming mentally deranged as if this were the ultimate fate of a rebellious woman. She is, in the words of Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics*, — "the monster woman".

The obverse of the male idealization of the woman is the male fear of femininity...the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, who *has* a story to tell — in short a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her.¹⁷

These words have an equal applicability for Abhaya. She, however, enjoys a better fate than Kiranmayi; she too is an intellectual woman

in rebellion, but she faces her opponent squarely and her arguments which are neatly phrased, easily secure her victory. In Abhaya, there is an implicit critique of Annada's erasure of self identity in the fact that her response is more positive; it is a life-affirming one, when Annada's unproductive life is taken into view. Abhaya acknowledges Annada's immense capacity for suffering, but chooses to be different even if that means becoming a social outcast. The desire for conformity, to identify oneself with the collective, is a safe choice; safe yes, but not necessarily a pleasant one. In her challenge of the normative roles that women were expected to play in society, in her breaking away from the traditional bonds of marriage to pursue her own ideological convictions, one can trace the development of a feminist consciousness. She problematizes the limits of the official discourse by posing uncomfortable questions to Srikanta who, not knowing how to answer them, wriggles out of his difficult position on the pretext that his carriage is waiting.

The difference in the rhetoric that Srikanta employs in his first impression of these two women is striking. Whereas Annada-didi evokes a comparison with a "fire covered with ashes", Abhaya even before he has had a chance to make a proper acquaintance with her, is labeled a "forward" woman. And this adjective recurs a number of times. In both cases, the women are primarily identified as married women, and it is the signs of marriage that Srikanta's eyes first take notice. But this is no coincidence, he is looking for the 'good wife' in every woman. Annada is described thus:

She wore a set of bangles made of lac and between the parting of her dark hair was a vermillion mark, the sign of a married Hindu woman. (53)

And Abhaya:

Vermillion gleamed in her parting, she wore an iron bangle and one of shell. She had no other ornaments, she wore a simple saree with a red border. (145)¹⁸

What is evident is that Annada and Abhaya, placed within the same problematic of Manu's law register two opposed responses. Manu's laws regarding the conduct of women state that:

Him to whom her father may give her, or her brother ... she shall obey as long as he lives, and when he is dead, she must not insult (his memory) ... though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere) or devoid of good qualities. (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife. ... A faithful wife, who desires to dwell (after death) with her husband, must never do anything that might displease him who took her hand, whether he be alive or dead.¹⁹

Annada lives the law to the letter; she carries fidelity too far in pledging an unqualified devotion to a husband who was not only cruel and unconscionable, but a rapist and a murderer as well. Abhaya vehemently rejects the idea that the entire burden of fidelity in marriage should be borne by the woman alone. Her use of the word prostitute to term her condition at her husband's home marks her refusal to be treated merely as a sexual object, in a loveless marriage. She cherishes no desire to be a passive, docile and selfless creature, in other words, an 'ideal' woman — for, '[t]o be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no story ... is really a life in death, a death-in-life. The idea of contemplative purity evokes finally both heaven and grave'.²⁰

Like Kamal in *Sesh Prasna* (1917), Abhaya questions the sanctity of the marriage bond. She also questions the validity of the spiritual make-believe game surrounding the widow that the Hindu tradition engages in, so often. By making the widow a 'devi', by emphasizing her purity as the index to her greatness, the Hindu scriptures have systematically deprived her of her right to a proper life, of womanhood. Although Abhaya has been given ample textual space in the novel, her discourse is always ruptured by Srikanta's repeated references to his Annada-didi. Unlike the first part, Sati, Sita, and Savitri are no longer evoked because there is no longer the need to evoke them, the mention of Annada is sufficient, for she combines the essence of all of them. Not only is she the authoritarian model but something more — a sacred chant: by her nullification of her subjectivity, she ensures the continuation of the status quo. Srikanta not only stanches the development of an alternative discourse by punctuating it with 'traditionally accepted' elements of thought borrowed from the dominant ideology, but he pushes it to the peripheral regions of permissible discourse. By a system of

policing Abhaya's articulations Srikanta creates for his readers a familiar discursive universe with which the reader can easily identify. The dominant ideology which interpellates the 'good' woman as the chaste, passive and silent sufferer, delegitimizes the emergent oppositional discourse because it cannot appropriate it. The invisible presence of Annada dominates the entire second part of the novel. By the deliberate juxtaposition of the two discourses, by playing them off against each other, Saratchandra now begins to problematize the original construct of womanhood but, as yet, the discourse of the novel privileges Annada. The interruptions however become very important — two parallel discourses on women are being simultaneously produced and while one is selected for reproduction the other is constantly threatened with liminality.

Srikanta and Abhaya cannot enter into a meaningful dialogue because Abhaya speaks from a position that for Srikanta is wrong, because it is outside the male hegemonic discourse. When Abhaya relates to him her unfortunate experiences with her husband, Srikanta immediately recollects for the purpose of her instruction the sorrows that Annada, Rajlakshmi and the Burmese woman had borne in silence — as if tears were a woman's only luxury! The valorization of masochism of Annada that he indulges in, is in tune with his conservative, middle-class, bourgeois background as well as a self-feeding male fantasy. What he fails to see is that Annada had no other alternative, whereas Abhaya had Rohini Babu. The systematic undercutting of the feminist discourse of Abhaya by the use of that potent symbol, Annada, not only assigns it a marginal position and reinforces the power structure, but simultaneously glorifies patriarchal double standards. Srikanta at one point admits that it is because those remarkable women have suffered so much that they are especially memorable to him. Abhaya immediately counters this argument with

Are you implying that this has been the miserable lot for innumerable women through centuries, and I am not alone. Srikanta Babu is it the capability to bear suffering patiently that is the highest virtue in women? (188)

From our experience of Abhaya, one can see that Annada is only an abstract ideal that Srikanta has from his childhood exaggerated beyond

all proportion. Besides, there is a degree of inconsistency in his stand points when he philosophizes on issues and when he faces an actual situation. In the very first part of the novel, Srikanta illustrates the social exploitation of the helpless widow through the story of Nirupama with whom he professes to sympathize, and yet, this is the condition he recommends for Abhaya: a life of '*brahmacharya*', of celibacy. Could these shifts perhaps be reflective of the author's own ambivalent stance? The sexual purity of women seems to have always been a major source of male anxiety, at least since the time of Manu. Feminine sexuality had to be contained within the domestic space and reserved for the enjoyment of its sole proprietor — the husband. And after his death,

[a]t her pleasure, let her emaciate her body by (living on) pure flowers, roots and fruit; but she must never mention the name of another man after her husband has died. ...*Until death let her be patient (of hardships), self controlled and chaste*, and strive to (fulfill) that most excellent duty which is prescribed for wives who have one husband only.²¹ (Emphasis added.)

For Srikanta, Abhaya's radical stand is horrifying because she violates these traditional categories, she transgresses the rigid premises of Hindu law. He hardly recognizes the other side: the incessant humiliation, the physical torture that Abhaya had suffered. He was the first among the trio to meet Abhaya's husband and the latter leaves a very unfavourable impression on his mind. And yet, it is this 'wild buffalo from the forests of Burma' that, on his recommendation, Abhaya must faithfully serve. Abhaya's husband, in his letter to Srikanta, calls to his aid the names of Sita, Savitri and Sati, figures who with their cultural baggage seek to pin down the feminine identity, and have become the major weapons for exploitation of women under the sacred guise of chastity and self-effacing devotion. Besides, coming from him, they seem no more than a joke. Here alone Saratchandra indulges in a mockery of these 'sacred' ideals. Abhaya explodes the feminine mystique of the weak, helpless woman.

Although much of Bengali criticism tends to categorize Annada and Abhaya as binary opposites, the latter is coerced into taking up this position when she has to stand with her back against the wall, when

she has no other options left. Initially she too was a devoted wife, another version of Annada, and that powerful anesthetic, *pati-vratva*, had driven her to Burma in search of her absconding husband, to find her 'true', and 'respectable' place next to him. Abhaya, a woman from the conservative, middle-class Bengali society had dared to leave home, had bargained for all possible dangers and travelled so far just to be with him. During the trip on the ship, she had expressed fear and anxiety over the possibility of her husband's death. And when Srikanta stated his conviction that he was undoubtedly alive, Abhaya immediately touched his feet saying, "May you be blessed Srikanta Babu, there is nothing else I can desire." (149) Even after knowing what stuff her husband was made of, after Srikanta's encounter with him, she had consented to go and live with him. Sarah Mitter is right in pointing out that, '[t]he Sita ideal is a part of every Hindu woman's psychic inheritance'.²² She had rejected Rohini Babu's silent overtures, never reciprocated his love and had always silently reminded him that they were only co-passengers. It was the ill treatment that she received, coupled with her dynamic personality that compelled her to take this radical step, to break away from the bonds of a loveless marriage and live with Rohini. Only in one other work of Saratchandra had the hallowed concept of *satitva* been denigrated. It was in the short story "Sati" (1934). The merciless ironical tone of the story shows how this patriarchal notion trapped the man as well, and devoured a relationship. In fact the term 'sati' becomes ridiculous in the light of the development of the story — constancy is eavesdropping while the husband converses with a female client and undue suspicion of the husband's infidelity when he is away. But the irony functions at the expense of the wife and not the husband.

It is of no little importance that one notices, in the novel, a shift in Srikanta's position from his initial conservative, middle-class stance. Abhaya opens his eyes to an unexplored domain. He perceives the rightness of her actions, but can only grudgingly grant her a space to exercise her autonomy because it implies her encroaching upon the male territory. (The well-known Bengali literary critic Srikumar Bandyopadhyaya, finds in Abhaya's arguments the trace of a 'masculine intellect', framing this of course, is the assumption that women are

generally dim wits.) When Srikanta first perceives the love of Rohini for Abhaya his reaction is thus

Rohini departed — I did not call him back and he was soon lost in the crowd...tears filled my eyes and wiping them away I slowly walked home saying to myself — there is nothing so strong as this love, no great teacher like it, there is nothing it cannot accomplish.

Yet *blind tradition* of many many centuries whispered into my ears — no, no it isn't good, this love isn't good, it isn't sacred. (168) (Emphases added.)

There is in him a tension between having to define sacred and profane love, to accept love sanctioned by marriage as the only legitimate one, and having to recognize Rohini and Abhaya's affection for each other as good. What is remarkable here is his recognition of the blindness of tradition which enables Srikanta to stand outside the hegemonic discourse, to negate its sacrosanctity and question its oppressive tendencies. Later, after Abhaya returns to her beloved, he does not immediately condemn her but says:

[N]o, no, one shouldn't say this, one mustn't do this — this is not good — I have heard these and preached these as a matter of habit for long, but no longer. What is good, what is bad, why something is good for some and another thing bad for someone else — I shall only answer these questions after I hear everything from her and if not I have no right to judge her by reference to the scriptures, and I believe neither does God. (185)

Her crisis causes a change in his own perspectives. During his leave-taking from Abhaya, he even promises to write and ask her opinion should he confront a difficult situation. And later he finds it difficult to assume for himself the seat of judgement as easily as he had previously done. After the second part of the novel, Annada no longer remains a fetish. She no longer holds the privileged position as the point of reference for quintessential feminine virtues. In fact, she is scarcely mentioned after Book II. And when Srikanta meets Kamallata, in the fourth part of the novel, he is sympathetic to her plight, and does not chastise her conduct with examples from Annada's life, as he had done with Abhaya.

The unkindest cut, however, comes in the form of Srikanta's having to salvage Abhaya, to bring her back into the arena of 'good' women, to give her a respectable image, to show her as only the flip-side of the tame woman. By the care she lavishes on Srikanta, Abhaya is recognized as bearing the essential markers of goodness, of the 'right' brand of femininity and is thereby contained once again, within the dominant discourse. (Her previous transgressions are somewhat excused, and she is rewarded by a ~~benevolent~~ acceptance into the fold?) That is not surprising, at all. Mainstream/malestream literary practice has always expended energy in trying to 'neutralise and deligitimise the powerful woman by either appropriating her, by turning her into another version of the tame woman, or by excluding her, by pushing her beyond the margins of permissible discourse'.²¹ Despite that, Abhaya's fractured discourse causes more than just a temporary disturbance in the historical continuum.

The tension, however, is not resolved as yet, and the next time the opposition to Abhaya's decision comes, it is from far more powerful quarters — it is from Rajlakshmi. Her words reinstate the normative model of womanhood through her castigation of Abhaya's conduct. She echoes the distinctly male rhetoric:

There is no sin as great as the desertion of one's husband. ...
Men have always been playful, always been a little cruel, but
that does not give the wife the freedom to leave him. Women
must bear it or how else shall society function? (209)

Srikanta is surprised at her words. It might be Rajlakshmi's unfulfilled, unconscious desire for a happily married life, and respectable society, from which she has been banished forever, as a consequence of her profession, that makes her see the joys of wifely submission. Whereas Annada and Abhaya might be considered social rebels, Rajlakshmi is a total conformist. Annada privileges individual desire over social reputation and Abhaya demolishes the sacred 'aura of marriage while, Rajlakshmi, who would be perfectly right in bearing a grudge against society unquestioningly accepts the status quo. Her belief in the irreversibility of the Hindu marriage is so deeply entrenched that she remains faithful to the husband whom she did not remember and who had cheated both her and her sister. She not only maintains her fidelity

to him, she looks after his former wife and children but her ideas regarding wifely chastity also prevent her from marrying her childhood love. In her rejection of her professional name Pyari, her giving up of her career as a singer and later in her tenacious clinging to religion, and a stubborn maintenance of purity, Rajlakshmi consigns herself within the conservative parameters. Her 'purity' also becomes an obsession with her creator, for, she is always presented as 'freshly bathed,' and clothed in a 'white' silk sarree, ~~which are~~ conventional external symbols of her inner purity. In every instance of a prostitute figure in Saratchandra's writings, Rajlakshmi in *Srikanta*, Bijoli in *Andhare Alo* and Savitri in *Charitrahin*, the author by emphasizing on their purity seems to *save* them from degradation. While they all give up physical chastity, they retain an emotional chastity which adds further to their aura. Lenin in the memoirs of Klara Zetkin called to task this literary practice of depicting every prostitute as a 'sweet Madonna'. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments in this context that:

Saratchandra once proclaimed *manushyatva* (humanity) to be greater than *satitva* (chastity), but a close analysis of his novels shows that he always saved his women from physical 'impurity', as though without chastity all human qualities are nullified in women. This often reduces his women into feminine stereotypes, but paradoxically this is also the source of the novelist's popular appeal. This moral anchorage gained him the trust of basically conventional readers. Therefore he was free to question other social values, for he had left the roots undisturbed.²⁴

It was Saratchandra's deliberate imposition on Rajlakshmi the qualities that he knew would appeal to popular sentiments, that made him create her thus. The magnification of her matchless 'purity' is a technique of washing away the 'dirt' of her 'sinful' past. It is to her that Srikanta finally returns, so her creator makes her deserving of the 'honor'. Another technique employed by Saratchandra to 'elevate' Rajlakshmi's womanhood is the introduction of Banku in Part I; he gives her another identity — She is a mother. And though not a biological mother [as in the case of many of Saratchandra's works, *Bara-Didi* (1913), *Pandit-Masay* (1914), *Bindur Chhele* (1914) *Nishkriti* (1917)], Rajlakshmi takes the claims and responsibilities of motherhood very

seriously. In her refusal to let Srikanta extend his stay at her home, she seeks to keep an area of her life hidden from the view of her son that would not be consonant with the ideal of motherhood, she emerges as the traditionally valorized, 'de-sexualized' figure of the Mother. In the cultural splitting of identity — the mother and the whore, Rajlakshmi undercuts one because it threatens the other. The aura of 'motherhood' delivers her from 'sin'.

As in the case of Abhaya, Annada is mentioned just prior to his first meeting with Rajlakshmi in the following way: "Many years had passed since Didi had disappeared, and her image was growing dim in my memory. ..." (87) The mention of Annada acts as a rhetorical inversion, for Rajlakshmi, though she might share similar traditional beliefs, is absolutely different from her by virtue of her profession. Ironically, Rajlakshmi is the spokesperson for tradition within the novel. Srikanta and Rajlakshmi seem to change their ideological positions, and as Rajlakshmi's capacity to direct Srikanta's movements grows, so does she move towards the hegemonic discourse of patriarchy. Rajlakshmi's appropriation of the male discourse transfers to her its power. Strictly conforming to its dictates, she assumes her position above the rest of the characters, and takes a similar judgemental stance. As the novel progresses, one sees less of Rajlakshmi's witty, vibrant charm but finds a rather senile, prescriptivistic, and wordly-wise woman. It is no wonder that she sees Sunanda, later in Part IV, as violating the traditional definition of womanhood, falling short of the desirable 'feminine' qualities of warmth and tenderness. The condemnation of Sunanda, like the subtle critique of Abhaya's action, unsettles the reader's position, and its being articulated by a woman who has herself suffered in the hands of the patriarchal order urges the need to re-examine this construction of femininity.

Saratchandra, apart from the character of Abhaya and that of Sunanda in the third part of the novel, seems to favor the traditional model. Srikanta's incipient affection for Kamallata, his preference for the 'delectable-confectionery' brand of femininity, marks a tentative rejection of the Rajlakshmi of Part III. And introspection followed by a 'toning-down' of the diamond-hard edges is required before, she can be desirable once more. Conscious of her recent fall from grace, she

dolls herself up in pretty clothes and jewels, preoccupies herself with Srikanta's meals, and bestows on him her tenderest care when she meets him again in Part IV. In other words, Rajlakshmi being a rather smart woman, regains her 'femininity', and her beloved. Srikanta's comment on her change is interesting. For him, this 'newly redeemed' woman is the *actual* Rajlakshmi, and the other, merely an aberration. Although one might, initially, be a little skeptical about accepting Srikanta's remarks at face value, since he is never spared the authorial irony, Rajlakshmi both through her speech and action asseverates his views. In the context of Rajlakshmi's comments on Sunanda in the fourth part of *Srikanta*, Mecnakshi Mukherjee remarks that:

The retracting of the author's position is evident. The independence of spirit that deemed admirable at first turns out upon closer analysis to be too rigid and devoid of human warmth. Sunanda's unbending adherence to abstract principles causes sorrow to those around her and breaks up the joint family — an unforgivable sin in Saratchandra's world. It is as if Sarat Chandra does not know what to do with this fiery character after having created her. Submission of self and not assertion of self has generally been the quality he admires in women, and Sunanda turns out to be too independent. So she has to be kept in the background and later condemned indirectly through the influence she exerts on others. Judged as a human being Sunanda might score high, but as a woman she falls short in Saratchandra's scale of values.¹⁴

In his essay *Narir Mulya* (1923), Saratchandra made an anthropological study of the place of women in different societies across centuries. He located their abject position, in their dependence on the male; but he never pointed out that, this is due to their need for economic support and education. Having understood the exploitative base on which society was structured Saratchandra in this essay raised a number of radical issues. But never, even in his later novels did he incorporate these ideas. Was it because he understood thoroughly the economics of novel writing on which his income was dependent that he did not proceed any further? Sirajul Islam Choudhury locates in almost all of Saratchandra's novels the existence of a feudal hierarchy of lord and vassal.²⁶ It is that which stifles the development of individuality, and

puts a spurious halo around suffering as has happened with Annada, Rajlakshmi, Abhaya, in a word, with all his heroines. But the Srikanta-Rajlakshmi relationship resists this somewhat-easy categorization. One finds that, Srikanta, with the progress of the novel, becomes more of a passive character while Rajlakshmi's agency gets enhanced. Saratchandra inverts the age-old myth of the strong, protective hero, and of the social custom where the man provides the necessary economic support to the woman, here, one finds Srikanta living off Rajlakshmi's income. In spite of her expressed desire to come to a final resolution of their situation, Srikanta refuses on grounds of social prestige. And he claims himself a vagabond? What is social reputation for a man existing on the peripheries of society? Not that he should not have any, but coming from Srikanta even the mention of 'prestige' sounds like empty prattle. The moment he is in a financial crisis, he unashamedly solicits her assistance (although at other times, he refers to her money as 'tainted'); when he falls ill, it is her presence he seeks. And then he talks about losing face in society! He actually makes his life comfortable without having to bear any responsibility. Once and only once does he rise to the occasion, when, in the last few pages of the second part of the novel, he introduces Rajlakshmi as his wife, to members of his family. And it is to the lesson in courage he learnt from Abhaya, that he is indebted. It soon becomes apparent that Rajlakshmi's powerful presence is a deterrent to the development of Srikanta's personality. Thus, in the fourth part of the novel, Srikanta is easily charmed by Kamallata. Unlike his relationship with Rajlakshmi, he does not feel overwhelmed. With the less assertive Kamallata, he shares a more comfortable, a more satisfying relationship.

Kamallata is the only character who is not evaluated against any moral-ethical category. Being a *vaishnavi*, she exists outside the domestic space, and so, there is no need to contain her sexuality within conservative parameters. She can assert her identity without having to make any compromises. She alone feels unashamed while speaking of her past, and does not understate her involvement in the events that befell her. Even the decision to join the convent is her own. She expresses her love for Srikanta freely. Like Rajlakshmi she is a marginal character in the social configuration, but unlike her she seems to lack a binding

moral category and thus can function as a free individual and relate to others. She like Abhaya, is the symbol of triumphant womanhood. Srikanta too has come a long way from his boyhood vision of Annada as living a 'fantastic ideology', his evasion of Abhaya's ontological queries; there is finally, no longer the need to put women in divine/demoniac-labeled hermetically-sealed compartments. In the last pages of the novel, he sees them more as human beings, recognizes their complexities, their problems, the difficult choices they sometimes had to make, in a word, their wholeness. And it is easier for him to connect with them. The novel provides an interesting study on masculinity too, but that is beyond the scope of this paper, for another day and occasion.

Did Saratchandra subscribe to the nationalist paradigm of femininity? A 'yes' would be too easy an answer. And suspect too. He did, and may be very often. But not always. After all, he gives Annada and Abhaya almost equal textual space. At least throughout this novel, one notices the creation and subversion of myths regarding women. The polyvalency of the novel exists in the convergence of heterogeneous voices. Thus, though Srikanta can maintain a conservative stand on the "women's question" at the end of Part I, this is threatened in Part II and he is finally unable to take up a position at all. The application of a rigid homogeneous category to contain the multiplicity of perspectives has been problematized in the novel and seems to become a problem for its author as well.

REFERENCE

1. Tanika Sarkar, "Nationalist Iconography: Image of Women in 19th century Bengali Literature", *Economic and Political Weekly* (November 21, 1987), p. 2011.
2. In this context Spivak remarks that, "[Imperialism's image as the establisher of the good society is marked by the espousal of the woman as object of protection from her own kind" and adds, "Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the "third-world woman" caught between tradition and modernization."

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (eds.) Nelson, Cary and Lawrence Grossberg (Illinois 1988), pp. 299 & 306.

3. Cited in "Whatever happened to the Vedic *Dasi*?" by Uma Chakravarty in *Recasting Women*, (eds.) Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (Delhi 1989), p. 35.
4. Cited in M. Karlekar's *Voices form Within* (Delhi 1991), p. 84.
5. Cited in the introduction to Michel Foucault's "The Order of Discourse" in *Untying the Text*, (ed.) Robert Young (New York 1985), p. 49.
6. Madhusudan Dutta *Madhusudan Rachanabali* (Calcutta 1965), p. 519.
7. An article in favour of education for women published in July 1881 in the *Bamabodhini Patrika*, started and patronized by the Brahmos stated its point as follows:

...the kind of pure enjoyment that is available to husband and wife in civilized countries is not present in our country. The husband does not receive enough from his wife to satisfy his expectations. Women are nearly all uneducated, and an educated person can never have a satisfying conversation with an uneducated person. Therefore the husband having finished his official work, will go elsewhere for relaxation. For him the house is no longer the place of peace, but has become a place of discord.

Cited in Meredith Borthwick's *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (Princeton 1984), p. 118.

8. For further discussion on this, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton 1993), p. 129.
9. Sibaji Bandyopadhyaya, "The Contemporary Popular Bengali Fiction: Textual Strategies". Seminar on *Indian Women: Myth and Reality* (Jadavpur 1989), (mimeograph).
10. Tanika Sarkar, "Hindu Conjuality and Nationalism in Late Nineteenth Century Bengal". Seminar on *Indian Women: Myth and Reality* (Jadavpur 1989), (mimeograph).
11. Throughout the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century the 'ideal Hindu wife' was the center of acrimonious debates among the revivalists and the modern-reformers on issues of the abolition of Sati (1829), the legalization of widow remarriage (1856) and the Native Marriage Act III of 1872, among others. The Hindu conservatives were enraged at the fracturing of the institution of Hindu marriage through these reformative measures which, adversely affected the interests of Hindu patriarchy and its desire to maintain complete control over female behavior through the imperative of absolute chastity. The legalization of widow remarriage was

a severe attack on scriptural prescriptions of monogamy for the Hindu woman. It also problematized the Hindu laws on inheritance of a dead man's property by his widow. Since for a woman marriage did not dissolve with the death of her husband, her contracting a second marriage would be tantamount to adultery, and therefore disqualify her claim to any share in her first husband's property.

For more information on the laws of inheritance for Hindu widows in colonial India, please see Lucy Carroll, "Law, Custom and Statutory Social Reform: The Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act of 1856" in *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Survival, Work and the State*, (ed.) J. Krishnamurti (Delhi 1989).

12. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (eds.) Nelson, Cary and Lawrence Grossberg (Illinois 1988), p. 299.
13. Santidayini is the heroine of Pyarichand Mitra's *Bamatoshini* (Calcutta 1881).
14. Rabindranath Tagore *Yogayog* (Calcutta 1961), p. 710. Translation mine.
15. Cited in the introduction to Michel Foucault's "The Order of Discourse" in *Untying the Text*, (ed.) Robert Young (New York 1985), pp. 48-49.
16. All translations of *Srikanta*, Part I are taken from K.C. Sen's translation *Srikant* (Bombay 1965). The page numbers refer to this book.
17. Toril Moi *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London and New York 1985), p. 58.
18. The translations from the second part of the novel are mine. The page numbers are from *Srikanta*, Sahityamela (Calcutta 1991).
19. *The Laws of Manu* Translated by George Buehler. *Sacred Books of the East*, (ed.) F. Max Mueller.
20. Toril Moi, *op. cit.*
21. *The Laws of Manu*, *op. cit.*
22. Mitter, Sarah: *Dharma's Daughters* (New Brunswick 1991), p. 86.
23. Sibaji Bandyopadhyaya, *op. cit.*
24. Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality* (Delhi 1985), p. 106.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
26. Sirajul Islam Choudhury, *Saratchandra o Samantabad* (Dhaka 1978), pp. 59-87.

HISTORICIZING SAROJINI NAIDU

At least since the emergence of major modern Indian poets in English like Nissim Ezekiel, Keki Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahapatra, Dom Moraes and Kamala Das in the Indian literary scene, Sarojini Naidu's poetry has come under attack from Indian English poets as well as critics for various reasons. She is dubbed first at a romantic poet, perhaps the last of them in Indian English poetry who wrote a kind of poetry that was flamboyant and inflated in style, too musical to echo the harsh truths of modern times and too overstated to be pithy and suggestive. The image of India that emerges from her poetry is considered inauthentic for, she failed to touch upon the burning problems of the day even when she lived in a period of turmoil, refold and transition. In her poems, critics say, we encounter an India that is too colourful and exotic, an India of bangle sellers and snake charmers, an India that looks like an Orientalist construction. She has also been accused of 'much cloying sweetness and a lack of intellectual force'.¹ It has also been pointed out that her long poems have no appeal for a modern audience, as they are too romantic and sentimental. She is said to have "got lost in a welter of vague romantic sentimentality"² and her poetry alongwith that of some of her contemporaries has been attacked as "a highly stylized medium of outpouring of emotions whose artificiality was simultaneously concealed and betrayed by their conventional clichés and imitative cadences."³ She is said to have evaded major issues of life. "Although a rebel in her personal life and an active freedom fighter she was not essentially a feminist in her attitudes. Somehow she revels in the traditional role of the woman as a wife and a mother."⁴ Pointing to her poems like 'Dirge' and 'Widow', this critic comments that there is a calm acceptance of the situation instead of any rebellion against it. She also says that when she had to confront the "unseemly aspects and complexities" of real India, she stopped writing poetry altogether as probably her romantic imagination was incapable of containing that complex vision.

Another charge is that her patriotic poems about the new dawn and a bright future for India inspired by the need of the moment appear redundant and irrelevant today, especially in the background of the sad post-Independence developments and the disillusionment of the young. Even when Sarojini Naidu sings of pain, it is a purely personal pain and does not reflect the collective frustration. Her choice of subject matter is said to be conventional and her technique stereotyped. A critic notes this and comments: "Sarojini Naidu is a notable example of ordinariness and absence of originality."⁵ Her lack of modernity and complete neglect of urban and industrial India with its drab and ugly life and the poverty and the misery of the workers has also come under fire. The modern readers are said to find very common ground between her poetic world and their contemporary and immediate world. That most of her poetry is written in traditional verse forms with little that is unique or fresh about their imagery is another familiar criticism. It has also been pointed out that "Naidu's fiery speeches, remarkable exercises in the rhetoric of feminism, give sufficient evidence of her commitment to the liberation of Hindu women. By contrast, her poems speak a meek language of traditional female subservience to the patriarchal Indian scheme of social organization."⁶ This critic, however, is quick to point out that "The truth about Sarojini Naidu's inner life is possibly between these two extremes of articulation about female destiny."⁷

While many of these charges appear true on the surface, one cannot desist from looking at the ideological premises of these criticisms. The criticism of the formal aspects of her poetry — her rhymes, metrical patterns, images, overstated style — has been made from a Eurocentric Modernist ideological perspective while the critique of the content of her poetry — the exoticism of her themes, the ahistoricity of her approach, her conventional choice of subject-matter — has a clear urban realist ideological bias. The criticism of her attitude to womanhood has been made from a West-inspired feminist ideological premise. Only by historicizing Sarojini Naidu's situation in the social discourse as well as the poetic discourse of her time can we disentangle her from these prejudices all of which emerge from the post-Independence Indian social and literary scenario. One may well remember that Sarojini Naidu gave up writing poetry in 1917. Modernist poetry was yet to emerge in any

language in India : It was a time when 'romantic' poetry — if the term can be applied to *chhayavadi*, *kalpanik*, *navodaya* and other such Indian poetic movements — was beginning to emerge in the *blashas* after a period of neoclassicism. Women's issues were beginning to be discussed, in the larger context of Indian freedom struggle, but feminism in the modern sense was yet to emerge as a major social and literary movement.

Indian poetry in English itself was in its initial stages; but for poets like Aurobindo, Henri Derozio and Toru Dutt, the scene was bleak and spiritless. It was still under the shadow of British Romantic and Victorian poetry, little influenced by either modern European poetry or the new English poetry that had begun to break free of the Victorian and the Georgian moulds. Even when she came to know later of modern poetry of the kind written by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, she looked at it as a passing fad as its formal experimentation failed to conform to her own concept of poetic beauty. She told her friend, Tara Ali Baig in 1946 that modern poetry had no future and that poetry would inevitably return to the discipline and beauty which metrical form imparted to the lyric.⁸ She had little respect for the new voices inspired by the post-Industrial city. This indifference may have something to do with her upbringing. In her own words, "My ancestors for thousands of years have been lovers of the forests and mountain caves, great dreamers, great scholars, great ascetics. My father is a dreamer himself, a greater dreamer, a great man whose life has been a magnificent failure...."⁹ She inherited from her alchemist father a craving for beauty, and a secret desire for mystery while from her mother she inherited her poetic exuberance and love of music. Her years of girlhood were peaceful and of even tenor, and her home orderly and of a liberal ambience, free from the tension and pollution of the industrial age that was waiting to overtake. A willing learner and speaker of English at a very early age, she also began to 'lisp in numbers' in her very childhood. Forced to study science and mathematics, she could never reconcile herself to that world of pure rationality. In her own words, "I was sighing over a sum of algebra; it would not come right, but instead, a whole poem came to me suddenly. I wrote it down. From that day my poetic career began."¹⁰ She believed in spontaneity and even as a child got acquainted with Shelley, Tennyson, Browning, the Rossettis and Swinburne and other popular poets of the 80s and 90s of the nineteenth century alongwith

quite a bit of Sanskrit and Bengali poetry through her parents and Urdu and Persian poetry (Khayyam, Rumi, Ghalib, Mir, Hali, Iqbal) through her friends at Hyderabad. Her impassioned love affair with Govindarajulu Naidu, her almost forced stay in England for three years (1895-98) as a student, her marriage in the teeth of opposition from her parents, her love of home and children and her historic meeting with Edmund Gosse in England, to whom she dedicated *The Golden Threshold*, her first book of poems and who introduced *the Bird of Time*, her second book, her introduction to Arthur Symonds and the members of the Rhymers Club who insisted on material discipline, musical texture and verbal felicity as inevitable qualities of great poetry, her consequent distaste for modern experiments which she thought had an intellectual content but lacked spiritual exaltation, her love of the Tagore of *Gitanjali* and the songs: only in the context of all these can we understand the aesthetic ideology that unconsciously controlled and shaped her poetic creativity whose prime elements were spontaneity, sensuousness, exuberance, romantic celebration of life and nature, and the search for a beauty away from the everyday even while at times emerging from it.

While it is true Sarojini wrote in English, as it seemed natural and easy for her in the bi-lingual circumstance in which she grew up with the nature of education given to her, she has to be evaluated as an Indian poet alongwith her contemporaries writing in the languages of India. Looked at from this point of view, she was even a pioneer of Indian 'romanticism'. Most of the poets, who inaugurated these 'romantic-mystical' movements were born in the last decades of the nineteenth century: Maithili Saran Gupta (1886), Jayshankar Prasad (1889), Nirala (1896) and Sumitranandan Pant (1900) in Hindi, Bhai Vir Singh (1872) in Punjabi, Bholanath Das (1858) in Assamese, Kumaran Asan (1873) and Vallathol (1878) in Malayalam, B. M. Srikantayya (1884) and D. R. Bendre (1896) in Kannada, Gangadhar Meher (1862) and Nandu Kishore Bal (1875) in Oriya, Subramania Bharati (1882) and Bharati Dasan (1891) in Tamil, Rayaprolu Subha Rao (1892) in Telegu, B. K. Thakore (1869) and Nanalal Dalpatram Kavi (1877) in Gujarati, Muhammad Iqbal (1877) in Urdu, Rabindranath Tagore (1861) and Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899) in Bengali are a few examples. *Chhayavad* in Hindi, *Navodaya* in Kannada, *Bhavakavita* or *Kalpanikodayamum* in Telegu, *Kalpanikata* in Malayalam, the *Ravikiran Mandali* in Marathi, *Navin*

Kavita in Gujarati and other similar movements in other languages, though not necessarily co-terminus or simultaneous, and not without specificities of content and form, shared certain characteristics to be found in full measure in Sarojini Naidu's poetry : a joyous celebration of nature, a love of the villages and the simple rural folk with their creative labor and festivities, adoration of all that is spectacular and colourful, a narrative element expressed at times directly as narrative poetry and at times indirectly as narrativity in tone, a preoccupation with love and death, love of the land articulated through a celebration of the soil, the rivers, the trees, the skies and the people, an atavistic attitude to the past with a kind of nostalgia inscribed in the very structure of feeling, domination of emotion over intellect, a vivid descriptiveness which may be mistaken for wordiness by modern readers but which really gave their poetry a painterly quality, a translucent dreaminess that envelopes both the memory and imagination and an unmistakable musical quality that was a combined product of metre, rhyme, rhythm and the inherent sonority of the words chosen.

Imagine Sarojini as a poet of Urdu *ghazals* or Hindi *chhayavadi* poetry, Telugu *bhavakavita* or the early semi-mystic and nature-oriented Bengali poetry of Tagore, and any reader will immediately know where to place her. Then we will begin to understand even the ambivalences attribute to her by her critics. Many of the 'romantic-patriotic' poets in the Indian languages share her ambivalences about class and gender. While she was sympathetic towards the peasants, workers, village craftsmen and other marginalized and oppressed classes, lashed out in her speeches against landlords and denounced the caste system in no uncertain terms, her own class background and the ethos she imbibed from Gandhi would not permit her to advocate or support violent struggles based on class or caste. With her respect for the endurance and strength of rural women in India and the idea of Indian womanhood — especially Aryan womanhood — she had inherited from the Orientalist and Nationalist ideology that surrounded her, it was impossible for her to take an aggressive feminist stance against the traditional ideas of womanhood and motherhood. Influential thinkers from Max Mueller and William Jones to Clarisse Bader and Katherine Mayo believed in the ideal of the Aryan woman, which they felt had fallen in disrepute as the sensuous woman had taken over. Sarojini was in reality a new

woman and a rebel in her personal life as she married the man of her choice against parental injunctions and grew into a political role model for Indian women in her later life as a freedom fighter. Her awareness of social issues also grew more extensive and intense during this phase by which time she had almost given up her poetic pursuits.

One is tempted to ask her the purely hypothetical question whether her poetry would have undergone a radical transformation both in form and outlook had she persisted in her poetic vocation, especially since those later years of her life not only brought her closer to the harsher realities of life but also witnessed a major shift in Indian poetic sensibility with the advent of modernism in all the languages with the emergence of poets like Muktibodh in Hindi, Faiz Ahmed Faiz in Urdu, Sachi Routray in Oriya, Bishnu De in Bengali, Navakanta Barua in Assamese, B. S. Mardhekar in Marathi, Sri Sri in Telugu, Gopalakrishna Adiga in Kannada, Ka. Na Subramaniam in Tamil and Ayyappa Paniker in Malayalam to cite only a few names of the pioneers. Even Tagore got transformed as evidenced by his last poems. Indian poetry in English also developed a deflated, forthright and sparse modern idiom and a new urban, cerebral sensibility with the arrival of Nissim Ezekiel, Adil Jussawalla, Keki Daruwalla, A. K. Ramanujan and others. One is not sure, as Sarojini was always dismissive of modern poetry and looked at it as a transient phase and as it would have been extremely painful for a poet of her romantic temperament to break free of her aesthetic ideology which was primarily concerned with concepts like Beauty and the Eternal and turned its face away from the ugly, the harsh and the bitter. It will be more realistic to accept Sarojini as she is, a product of her circumstances both historical and literary, one with a primarily rural and romantic sensibility that was totally Indian in its thematic and ethical orientations, as Indian as her counterparts in the Indian *bhashas*. What F. R. Leavis said of Tennyson can well be said of her poetry too, that what survives in her is the painter and the musician. The condemnation she has received in the hands of Modernists like R. Parthasarathy and Adil Jussawalla — a condemnation she shares with Toru Dutt, Aurobindo Ghosh, Manmohan Ghose, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and often even with Rabindranath Tagore who is charged by David Cecil with the emasculation of vocabulary and the repression of instinct — certainly requires reconsideration, especially at a time when

the decolonisation of sensibility is on the agenda of Indian poetry and when pre-Modernist poetry is being rediscovered from indigenous points of view. Edmund Gosse's comment that "she springs from the very soil of India and her spirit although it employs the English language as its vehicle, has no other tie with the West" ¹¹ alongwith K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's observation that "the panorama of India's ageless life fascinates her without end" ¹² need to be taken seriously. Her fate in the hands of Eurocentric modern poets and critics seems to have been similar to that of Ravivarma, the painter in the hands of modern painters and art critics : both were predominantly Indian in content while influenced by the West in the style of their expression, and both need to be retrieved for the Indian aesthetic tradition and restored to their due place in India's history of art and literature.

REFERENCES

1. M. K. Naik, *A History of Indian English Literature*, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi 1982), p. 69.
2. Chirantan Kulshreshtha ed., *Contemporary Indian Verse* (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann 1980), p. 11.
3. Subhas Chandra Saha, *Modern Indo-Anglian Love Poetry* (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop 1971), pp. 11-12.
4. Urmila Varma, 'Is Sarojini Naidu Relevant Today?' in K. K. Sharma ed., *Perspectives on Sarojini Naidu* p. 185.
5. Naik, *op. cit.*
6. Malashri Lal, 'The Golden Threshold of Sarojini Naidu' in *The Law of the Threshold: Women Writers in Indian English* (Shimla; I.I.A.S. 1995), p. 59.
7. Ibid.
8. A. N. Gupta & Satish Gupta, 'Sarojini Naidu: Formative Influence' in K. K. Sharma.
9. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, *Life and Myself*, Vol. I. (Mumbai: Nalanda 1948), p. 2.
10. Sarojini Naidu: Preface to *The Golden Threshold*.
11. Edmund Gosse, Introduction to *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and Spring* (London: William Heinemann 1974), p. 6.
12. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: Sterling 1989), p. 213.

THE BELLY OR THE WOMB: IS THAT THE QUESTION?

I call with the firm tone of humanity, for my arguments, Sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit—I plead for my sex—not for myself. Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue and independence I will ever square by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath.

Mary Woolstonecraft

If observed, we are brought up in a way that we think in one particular way and live in another. What is the meaning of those great writers and their books in the context of our lives? We read about those people who are not part of our geography. After reading them, it is quite natural that they become part of our thinking. We read Simone de Beauvoir, and live in a society in which a woman, despite her husband's insistence cannot get rid of her *purdah*. When it comes to the husband and wife, we show them as if they are lover and beloved, knowing it full well that the truth is hidden from none. The husband knows his wife and the wife her husband. And the people around know each other. All of us are actors of a play who with right sort of dialogues and acting are successful in playing our roles and hiding our real selves. What is seen or heard exists. This is the rule of life. This is a game. Then I thought what is wrong in saying what I feel as true, if I have not to play this game.

Rasheeda in *Manzoor Eltesham's* Sookha Burgad

What should I carry for the newly born girl?

A few flowers
from some garden
a few sentences
from some poem

and the belief
that after growing up she shall see the world
with her own eyes

that she shall break shackles
 shackles within the shackles
 ask for freedom
 and nothing less than freedom.

Nirmala Garh

On January 18, 1900 when questioned about women of India at the Shakespeare Club in Pasadena, California, Vivekananda referred to his inadequate knowledge of women of India — of their relations, of different languages and dialects that Indian women speak, of their races and castes and also of their manners and customs. Keeping the hazardous nature of his task he spoke of the ideal of Indian women. As I mull over the feminist discourse with reference to the Indian situation, I find myself in a situation worse than Vivekananda's, for he was a wise observer of human nature and a keen thinker. However, he found his knowledge of Indian women 'not to be so complete'. (54) He was, fortunately, unconcerned with the exclusivists' question so often raised by feminists who might have deprived him of the right of speaking about women on biological grounds. Admittedly, only she, not he, knows what she experiences, so only she can speak of it. If insisted a little too far, then each one of us from monkeys or gorillas to men or women in the last millions of years has lived his or her life independently. Each one of them lived his or her life individually and differently. Pain differs from person to person. The other can neither speak of nor share it. In a situation such as this, my endeavor becomes an encroachment making me aware of the Stephen Heathean dilemma of (his) man's space in the feminist discourse. Fortunately, at least for me the dilemma did not last for long as that of Hamlet, as he could carve some space for men in it. There has to be some space for men, for they are the cause of the cause. They were the subject and women the object in the patriarchal discourse. By subverting the structures, women strive to become the subject of their feminist discourse. The displacement impacts not only man-woman relationship but also man's perception of woman and his own. The present space, if at all, for a man in the feminist discourse is a consequence of his preceding roles. I too earn this space because of this strange/natural relationship. To take recourse to Ghalib:

*Kaba ke in buton se rishta hai door ka,
Goya hum you ke nahin, nikale hue to hein.*

(We, the stones are distantly related to the Kaba. We may not be from there, we are at least thrown out from there).

It may be a subtle way of becoming an insider and then sabotaging the feminist discourse. Shouldn't this be the concern of the feminists?

The truth, however, speaks differently on the other end. Difficult it is for me to be either a feminist or femenist whatever way one may spell it, for a woman's is a natural and authentic experience that she earns by/with her body, something that I cannot have. The authenticity and naturalness are integral parts of feminism. That is why their voice shall be theirs and not mine, however honest and sympathetic I may try to be. It is not possible for a man to read or participate in the discourse as a woman, but he can know the feminist discourse. It is here that Vivekananda's discussion of the ideal of Indian women gets problematised, for by doing so the man prescribes, and fixes roles. If they violate these 'given' roles, they become subversive rebels, 'unwomanly' or 'unIndian' for the prescribers of these roles, and revolutionaries for the feminists. All these rhetorical arguments notwithstanding, I consider my arguments as the claim of the living ink in the pen.

II

"What do 'they' ultimately want?", asked a perplexed friend after a presentation on feminist writing.

The tone of my friend in pronouncing 'they' disturbed me, though I too was trying to cope with the same question. Perhaps men are victims of an unnecessary anxiety at the loss of space, at being deprived of their ability to deprive or suppress. They suffer from the fear of impotence that they feel at the impending loss of their power of suppressing or even oppressing women. What they (women) seek is their own space, independence, and equality, denied to them for long. Referring to it towards the end of her *A Vindication of the Right of Women*, the *Bible* of feminism, Mary Woolstonecroft pleads for a fair treatment of women:

Be just then. O ye men of understanding! and mark not more severely what women do amiss, than the vicious tricks of the horse or the ass for whom ye provide provender — and allow her the privilege of to whom ye deny the rights of reason, or ye will be sorse than Egyptian task masters, expecting virtue where nature has not given understanding. (283)

Nowhere in the book does she betray even an iota of arrogance or immodesty. On the contrary, she speaks of women's emancipation for the sake of men, for if they (men) wanted suitable companions for them, they have to spare space for them — for full development of their faculties and the realization of their own selves. Yet Horace Walpole called her 'a hyena in petticoats'. (Cited in the "Introduction" to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.) The history of humankind is a witness to it that whenever woman questioned the given social and cultural structures and sought independence for herself, her nascent longings were suppressed or made fun of with such pronouncements. The questions of Gargi teased Yajnavalkya so much that he silenced her by chiding her with the words : 'Gargi *maatiprakshi na te moordha vyapapata danaat prashanya*'. (Be not excessively skeptical. Else your head will fall off.) (*Brihadaraanyakopanishada*, Chapter III, *Gargibrahmanam*, VI) In the *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, the disciples of Kanva abandon pregnant Shakuntala in the court of Dushyanta after the king refused to recognize her. Left to herself she begins to cry and begins to leave. Ironically, Sharadwata, one of the disciples, reads it as her act of becoming 'free,' and says, '*Kim purobhage swatantrayam-avlabhse*' (*Abhijnanashakuntalam*, Act V.26. 8). (O wanton woman! Do you resort to freedom?) In fact, there is no way out for her, for both the palace and the hermitage as well have rejected her. The masculinist structures that reign in both the places demand mute acceptance of the rejection. She cannot even cry. Her crying is construed as her rebellion. Even her tears are intolerable, for they scare man.

Fear leads to torture and suppression. Man begins to torture what scares him. That is how he has behaved with Nature, woman and tried to condition her nature by imposing on her structures suitable to his purposes. An emancipated woman ceases to be his colony, for she charts out her paths and follows them, thereby annihilating all possibilities of her physical and emotional exploitation. Her defiance of the given roles

that perpetuate her exploitation makes her a rebel — a man-made category. This is the price she has to pay for her freedom. Quite a few literary works by men and women have dealt with this issue. Yashpal's Divya in the eponymous novel becomes 'Dara' as a slave, as Bhoodhar Sharma has purchased her from Pratul, the slave trader. She (her milk in particular) becomes a commodity. Bhoodhar sells her to Chakradhar, a priest, as a foster-mother, for his wife did not have enough milk to feed her child. In the ensuing conflict between her duty as a foster-mother and her motherhood, her son remains hungry if she feeds the son of Chakradhar, and if she fails to do so, then she fails in her duty. The priest and his wife scold and reprimand her for her doing so. The wife of the priest sees the only convenient way of getting rid of Dara's child. On knowing the plan, she runs away from the priest's house and somehow reaches a Buddhist monastery on the outskirts of the town. She seeks shelter there. The monk does not accept her, for she asked for the shelter as a mother. When she expresses her willingness to be a woman servant there, the monk asks her if she had the permission of father, husband or son. She tells him that her father was no more, she had no husband, and the son was in her lap. The monk still scorns her requests and begins to leave the seat. At this, she falls at his feet and pleads with the arguments that the monk had sheltered Amrapali, the prostitute, and here he leaves her as a destitute — without food or shelter. The monk responds indifferently that a prostitute is a 'free' woman.

A woman does not have many options to exercise. She can accept the patriarchal structures and play her roles as daughter, sister, and mother. Her acceptance of patriarchal tyranny helps her in taking care of her body or belly, to be precise. In the process, her womb further complicates her dilemma. Her glorification as a dutiful wife may lead to her murder in private or as *sati* in public, and as a mother (a woman with a belly and a womb) to her real and symbolical suicides, as the role on more occasions than one hinders her self realization, for she does not live but exists on the terms of others. These terms become thick layers on her self.

A woman could be free, if at all, only as Amrapali or Mira. She has to either sell off her body in installments for her belly or negate her body and womb as a spiritual devotee as Mira did. This spirituality is a sublimated form of self courted *sati*. The rejection of an individual by family and society precedes rejection of familial and social givens

and negation of the physical self. In one sense, it is an act of rebellion. Ironically, the result of this 'metaphysical suicide', *a la* Albert Camus, is the most precious possession of humanity, as in the case of Mira, in the form of devotional poetry.

A woman can be Sita or Radha or Mira or Amrapali. The crucible of patriarchal yardsticks determines her. She is made Sita or Amrapali. Amrapali is the freest of all, for she has to prove nothing. Sita has to prove herself that she is Sita. It is Sita, not Ram or Laxman — not even Ravan, who has to go through fire. She becomes a Radha. That is her choice. Radha's is an exceptional case. She is a rebel against social ethos, yet the Indian society did not condemn her. Rather her social acceptance clouds the character of Rukmini, the legitimate wife of Krishna. Mira is to an extent compelled to be a rebel and becomes Mira by choosing the path of metaphysical suicide instead of committing physical suicide. The lesser sisters of Mira find it difficult to either accept the givens or revolt against them. It is the predicament of the educated women of middle-class in the fictional world of Shashi Deshpande. They are trapped between two words — of their father or husband. They are either so used to little comforts provided by the middle-class life that they find the world beyond too insecure and difficult to live, or they develop an ability of endurance. They cannot slam the door and leave the house of their father or husband. If they do so, they are to lead a life of emotional vacuum. Radhika in Usha Priyamvada's *Rukogi Nahin Radhika* ("Wouldn't You Stop Radhika") intends to pursue a course in arts in the U.S.A. against the wishes of her father. She supports herself in the U.S. and completes her study. On return finds she herself in an emotional and cultural vacuum. She suffers for her decision of being herself on her return, as he refuses to support her emotionally or financially expecting he to come to him, and kneel and beseech his help. She does go to him as a daughter but finds that her father has not forgiven her for defying him. As an arrogant patriarch, he is too engrossed with his artistic pursuits and the second wife to receive his daughter on her return from abroad after years. She leaves her father's place and tries to establish herself without counting on either her father or rich brother. The more she tries to come to terms with her own self in the process of establishing amidst aliens in Delhi, the more she is trapped in it.

Since feminism as movement saw its rise in the West, it was expected to find its expression in Indian writing in English among Indian literatures. However, one finds that there are, fortunately or unfortunately, not many subscribers to it at least in Indian English novel. On the one hand, there is a virtual scramble for categories like postmodernism and postcolonialism, on the other hand the Indian women novelists betray no willingness for the label or category of feminism that they can legitimately claim. Shashi Deshpande, for instance, invested much of her energy in rejecting the label of feminism in the initial days that her critics were so willing to paste on her and her works. Later on she changed her position, and called herself's feminist. In my life, I mean. But not consciously as a novelist.' ("Shashi Deshpande Talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom", *Wasafiri*, 17, Spring 1993.) The central issue of her concerns remains the degradation, the sub-ordination and the inequality that women experience and continue to live in these conditions. She rejects the category of the feminist writing or writer, for writing can be good or bad but not man's or woman's, according to her.

Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* is a 'strange' exception to it. Strange I say because the novelist is not deliberately expressing feminist concerns, and her neurotic protagonist is not fully conscious of her preference for herself to her husband against the traditional Indian wife's willingness to sacrifice her life for her husband. With the character of Maya, the female protagonist, who is a young and sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prophecy of a non-avertable disaster, the novelist seems to dabble with feminist concerns. Maya's dilemma is not so concerned with either her belly or womb, for the patriarchal social order (her father and husband) has resolved these questions, of course, in its own way. But a woman that she is, she is not, as her male counterparts often mistake her to be, a mere belly or womb. A woman is above all intellect too. She has a heart (with feelings and emotions) and head (intellect). The questions of her belly and womb are resolved in such a way for her that she is emotionally and even intellectually impaired. Haunted by the obsession with the prophecy she leads a life of martial discord with a streak of neurotic fantasy, aggravated by her husband's inability to respond to her emotional needs. Gautam, her husband, unlike his mythical counterpart, lives not for living Maya but for material form of Maya *i.e.* money. In the end, she has to choose between her husband

and herself. Since she sees her husband's lack of interest in life and its shades, she pushes him off, his figure 'an ugly, crooked gray shadow that transgressed its sorrowing chastity — caught between her and the worshipped moon' (208), 'down to the very bottom through an intensity of air'. Maya's act of self-assertion and rejection of her husband's life invites feminist reading, though male chauvinists may always run her choice down by saying, 'that's what mad women do'. The counter questions crop up here : Who made her mad? Who impaired her intellect/neurosis?

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* begins with the promise of examining the feminist concerns in the Indian context by combining 'small things' — dalits, women and children. Their 'gods' — Marx, Men and God — have failed them. Women and *dalits* share a similar fate, for by their very birth they are stigmatized for none of their faults. The moment their sex or caste is determined, they are cast away and forced to live with the given stigmas. They cannot lead their lives according to their desires. This similarity of fate brings Vellutha and Ammu together. Vellutha, the untouchable, struggles against the high-caste dominated society. He is crushed to death by the police for allegedly molesting Ammu, a high-caste woman who, in fact, had taken the initiative in the affair. Ammu is locked in a tragic struggle with her family, society and its morality. She sought freedom from these shackles and paid the penalty ultimately. When she went to the police station to help Vellutha who is in the custody because of her, the police inspector calls her a *veshya* (prostitute). Her broken marriage, condemnation by her family members — brother, even mother and grand aunt — she is left with no option but leave the walls of her home and seek a job for herself. Even the novelist conveniently gets rid of her by showing her dead in a room of a lodge.

The novelist portrays the double standards of social behavior and morality through the characters of Chacko and Mamachi. Mamachi is a victim of the patriarchal familial and social order in which the husband can be as cruel and brutal as he wishes, and the women have to tolerate it. Ironically, some of the women become handmaids of suppression of their own. Mamachi's husband is a polite, generous, loving husband and an affectionate father to the world but a tyrannical cruel father and husband who humiliates, even beats, his wife and children for flimsy

things. "He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully with a streak of vicious cunning" (180). Like Papachi, his son Chacko too has two-sided personality. In the house his room has a secret separate entrance that facilitates satisfaction of his 'man's Needs'. Mamachi knew of her husband's libertine relationship with the women working in the factory, so did Baby-Kochamma. The women in the Ayemenem house give implicit sanction to Chacko's 'Man Needs', but not Ammu's desire for Vellutha. It shows that a woman at times subscribes to the double standards that support suppression of other women by the patriarchal order. These women are the victims of patriarchy and become the perpetrators of torture, inequality and injustice against women unconsciously. Further, in India untouchability cuts across religious and regional lines. Even the Syrian Christians who swear by the western culture at the drop of a hat subscribe to it. Baby Kochamma does not allow Ammu to help Vellutha, for he is a low caste. She goes to the extent of making Esthan condemn Vellutha on the pretext that by doing so he would save his mother. It is injudicious to impose terms on the creativity, yet one feels that Arundhati Roy missed an opportunity by not including a *dalit* woman in the compass of concerns for 'small' things because she is doubly suppressed or, to use the more fashionable term, 'doubly colonized'. For one she is a *dalit*, and then as a woman she has to carry the burden of the generation of suppressed Velluthas and of their suppression on her. The Velluthas suppress her. She is the smallest thing. Arundhanti Roy, the new Goddess, also failed her.

III

Indian English poetry is frailer in terms of poetic quality and scantier in quantity than Indian English novel and the participation of women in it is even less. However, some of the poetesses as Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia, Eunice de Souza and Sujata Bhatt among others write about women and themselves with greater loyalty to their cause, spiky bite and resilience than their much famous fictionalizing sisters. They express their angst freely against the conventional concept of Indian women and define the roles that they had to play until now.

Mamata Kalia comments slyly and ironically on the non-happening predicament of women, when she says: "But nothing ever happened to me/except two children/and two miscarriages..." ("Sheer Good Luck"). She out rightly rejects man's perception of things and man-centered discourses on which women are fed:

I can't bear to read Robert Frost.
 Why should he talk of apple picking...
 I haven't even seen an apple for months...
 Whatever we save we keep for beer
 And contraceptives. ("Against Robert Frost")

Without being apologetic for being a woman, she happily accepts her belly and womb. They are not fetters for her, but an essential part of being, so she celebrates them with all the resources at her disposal. Further, she has a free will and intellect that do not yield to the standards and norms of behavior and conduct fixed by men, as she says: "I want to pay Sunday visits/totally undressed ..." ("Compulsions"). Concerned with the types of Indian women that silently endures, it is the role of wife that has earned the attention of their poetic faculty. In the poem "The Old Playhouse" Kamala Das writes about it:

It was not to gather knowledge
 Of yet another man that I came to you but to learn
 What I was, and by learning, to learn to grow, but every
 Lesson you gave me about yourself....
 You called me wife,
 I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
 To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering
 Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and
 Became a dwarf. (87)

Gauri Deshpande draws a clear line of distinction between female and male species and tries to define feminine, if not feminist, sensibility. Let me withdraw myself and allow the poetess to speak for herself and her counterparts.

Sometimes you want to talk
 about love and despair

and the ungratefulness of children.
A man is no use whatever then.
You want then your mother
or sister
or the girl with you went through school,
and your first love, and her
first child — a girl —
and your second.” (89)

These extracts from randomly selected poems contain in them all the phases — female, feminine, and feminist. Yet they do not show radical departure of the kind of the western feminism which proposed insulation of the world of women from that of the men before entering the post-feminist era. The reason for this may be that family still exists in India despite many blows to it, and if exists, though in its changed form, the credit for it should go to women. The radical individualism of the West does not find favor with Indian mind that by its nature thinks holistically, though the whole may family, community, society, nature, or whole universe. Further, layers of familial, social relationships are multiple to the extent of complexity, definite to the extent of science, and strong to the extent of extremely caring and even encroachment. In the West, only effective relationship is that of husband and wife. That too, till it lasts. The transitory nature of husband-wife makes light of mother-father relationship causing a free-play of other relationships like brother-sister relationship that are concrete and strong in India, leave aside the grandfather and grandmother who are bound to old age homes.

Vrinda Nabar has listed various factors — caste, class, economic deprivation, sectarian fragmentation, size and numbers, overpopulation, the growing power of fundamental forces, the sway of superstitions, female foeticide and above all the essential nature of what she terms as Hinduism that create ‘vastly differently scenario in India encompassing contradictions of a kind undreamed of in mainstream [Western] feminist philosophy’ (26). It should, however, not mean that the Western feminist theoretical insights, for instance, Elaine Showalter’s observations regarding the three phases in the Western women writing as ‘feminine’, ‘feminist’ and ‘female’ (13), are of no use to us. These factors, singly or combined, account for different literary response by India women writers. An Indian poetess, though she may be utterly disgusted with her father, does not

call him 'a bastard', as does Sylvia Plath in "Daddy", 'Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through' (478). However intense or intolerable may have been her hurt, all of our ingenious racial, biological or psychological interpretations of the poem fail to find the suitability of calling her father a 'bastard'. It is not a question of mere cultural shock but of the poetess's inability to find a suitable "objective co-relative" for her legitimate wrath against patriarchy. Her failure compels her to bastardize her poetic art. As against this famous poem stands not so famous poem of Mamta Kalia, "Tribute to Papa". The tribute becomes a pregnant site of generational difference with regard to values, ideals and way of looking at each other and the world around. The poetess rejects her father's life of 'limited dreams'. In her ironic mood, she terms her father to be 'an unsuccessful man'. That's what a 'Lower Division Clerk, Accounts Section' can be

You want me to be like you, Papa,
Or like Rani Lakshmibai.
You're not sure what greatness is,
But you want me to be great.

I give two donkey-claps for your greatness.
And three for Rani Lakshmibai....

Everything about you clashes with nearly
everything about me. (90)

She intends to choose her own course, follow her own ideals, so she rejects her father's notions of greatness and the Indian model of a woman as Laxmibai who fought and died in one sense for the sake of women but her son—something that patriarchy would not mind. She even thinks of disowning her father and calling him by his surname. The 'new' woman shows utter disregard for her father's otiose notions of morality by which he lives. She does respond to her desires but carefully, without even making her coward father think of suicide. That makes one think of different model of Indian feminism from the western feminism, for Indian women have a different history, different ethos, and forms of social stratification and patriarchal domination. They live in a different social and cultural reality, nay realities, and respond to them in as varied ways as they are. Keeping this in view, K. Satchidanandan rightly speaks of developing a feminist literary theory specific to our own creative and

critical situation, without abandoning shared patterns of reading and writing (5). He further observed that it would be simplistic to assume that the White middle class feminist theories can ever explain Janabai's appeal to Vithoba, Sumangalmata's Buddhist serenity purged of all lust and hate, Mahasweta Devi's account of the tribal Jasoda or Draupadi or Sugathakumari's Devaki dreaming in her prison of Krishna, the liberator (8). Indian feminist literary theory because of the pluralistic Indian situation will be pluralistic and provisional, though at the core the vision will be 'fixed'. It will be Indian — that is ever inclusive, therefore ever progressive. My participation in this process demands another occasion. I have, however, to keep in mind what Shashi Deshpande in the afore-mentioned interview observed regarding feminism. "But to me, feminism isn't a matter of theory : it is difficult to apply Kate Millet or Simon de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. And then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children, or about not being married, not having children, etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not and to say that we have to discover what it is in our lives, our experiences. And I actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without knowing it. ... So for me feminism is translating what is used up in endurance into something positive." Shashi Deshpande's caveat against injudicious acceptance, application of the Western feminist theories and construction of our own theory has another side. Whatever may be the theory of feminism, it should be constructed without ignoring the other India (the two Indias being India and Bharata) — the women of Bharata, the unlucky non-middle-class, non-upper-class, the uneducated, rural particularly *dalit* multitude of Indian women, though that can be used to divide the women. Here it is worth remembering that the *dalits*-men and women-are subject of suppression by ages-old economic and social deprivation at the hands of the high-class. That way the *dalit* women are freer than their other middle class high caste women, for they do not remain confined to the four walls and participate in economic activities.

For my present purpose, I can think of no better way of concluding this endeavour of mine, though abruptly, than end it with a poem entitled "Even the other Foot out of the Threshold..." by Saroop Dhruva, an

Indian poetess in Gujarati, who charts out a new course for the Indian Cinderella's, by re-writing the fairy tale of Cinderella.

Cinderella

What is this?

Why have you stopped?

See, one of your feet is still
inside the threshold.

How much time left in going out?

Let both hands of the clock meet at 12.

let you be left outside the door,
and the doors be shut completely.

Lose you will, if at all, then these golden shoes,
and

these garments of yours.

So what.

That way, these tangled tufts and the tattered rags
the naked feet and hollowed slackened eyes
are your reality.

Within the four walls

before the stove in a corner of the house, or
on the other side of seven layers
your reality was the same...

That is your past.'

However...

People had given you
Rosy flower-printed frocks
to save their prestige
and retain their control on you.

That too

On one condition...

Learn only that these people would teach,

Speak what they want you to speak.

Only theirs is the right choice,
not what you like.

You may exist...

If..., then...

If..., then...

If..., then...

Only then, you shall get the promise of safety.

Within the *Laxman rekha* drawn by them,
With the sound of the clock kept by them,
And by their winding up,
You have to live..

Now the time has come.
Say, which side you have to go?
But do remember that you were alone inside.
Alone you are, so shall you always remain...
But outside...
Outside there shall be many Cinderellas of the past.
Some gathering papers, then some selling vegetables.
Some sowing, some harvesting,
Some with axes and some empty-handed...
Reading, teaching, gleaning and gathering wood or
Giving birth to children, rearing them, marrying, and getting married,
Getting something or other done,
Cooking, sewing, or making pavements,
Barefooted, in tatters, Cinderellas, Cinderellas...

Moreover,...
Do remember this too
That neither for them nor for you,
A golden fairy is now to come;
No magical band will touch you.
Yes, it may happen that one day
Even these rags would not be available for them.
Then that shall be your disrobing ceremony.
Then it may happen that you have to then
Cover yourselves with you breaths
And wander around by covering yourselves with each other's sighs...

Come what may...
You have to pluck the feathers of the fairy tale
so popular after your name...
And then,
You have to weave
your dress
after removing the threads
one by one
from the cocoon wrapped around you.

And that would never be
A camouflage to escape
To hide or be hidden!!!

Then.....?

Set out,

Sec, can you hear?

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,
nine, ten, eleven

And...

Do withdraw at least now

Even the other foot out of the threshold." (64-65)

REFERENCES

- Anita Desai, *Cry, the Peacock*. (Delhi 1980).
- Saroop Dhruv, "Beejo pag pan Oomara ni bahar", "Even the other out of the threshold" in *Mudrankan*, 1989. Translation mine.
- Manzoor Ehtesham, *Sookha Bargad*. Delhi: 1986 Translation of the epigraphical excerpt mine.
- Nirmala Garg "Kya le jayoon navjaat bachchi ke live" ("What should I carry with me for the Newly-born Girl?"), *Hans*, January 2000, p. 154. Translation mine.
- Saleem Peerandina, *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English: An Assessment and Selection*. Madras 1972. The poetic extract of Mamta Kalia, Gauri Deshpande and Kamala Das are from this anthology.
- Sylvia Plath, "Daddy" in *Twentieth Century Verse: An Anglo-American Anthology*. Ed. C.T. Thomas. Madras 1979.
- Usha Priyamvada, "Rukogi Nahin Radhika" (Wouldn't You Stop Radhika?), Delhi 1984.
- Arundhati Roy, *The God of the Small Things*, Delhi 1997.
- K. Satchidanandan, "The Laughing Medusa or the Raging Draupadi", *Indian Literature*, 157, Sept.-Oct. 1993.
- Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*. Princeton, N.J. 1997.
- Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VIII. Calcutta 1992.
- Mary Woolstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Oxford: 1994.

